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CONTENTS

Vedic Prayers 697

Messages to East and West
Editorial 698

Images of India's Past 705

Inspiration Never Dies
Dr. M. Ram Murty 706

Symposium: A Problem in the
Epistemology of Advaita Vedanta
Dr. Arvind Sharma 715

India's Prayer
Rabindranath Tagore 724

Continued on the next page

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Religion and Life: Swami Bhuteshanandaji's Answers to Questions <i>A Compilation</i> 725	<i>Stories That Inspire:</i> The Turning Point 737
Let us Become Immortal <i>Fr. Anthony Elenjimittam</i> 727	Reviews and Notices 739
The Image of Sri Ramakrishna: Its Significance <i>Swami Satprakashananda</i> 729	News and Reports: Centenary Celebrations of Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati 740
Homage to Huxley <i>Susan Walters</i> 732	

उत्तिष्ठत
जाग्रत
प्राप्य
वरान्निबोधत



PRABUDDHA BHARATA

ARISE! AWAKE! AND STOP NOT TILL THE GOAL IS REACHED

Vol. 104

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No. 8

VEDIC PRAYERS

अप नः शोश्रुचदधमग्ने श्रुश्रुग्ध्या रयिम्।
अप नः शोश्रुचदधम्॥
—Rg Veda, 1.97.1

O Agni! May all our sins be destroyed.
Bestow wealth on us. Destroy all our sins.

सुक्षेत्रिया सुगातुया वसूया च यजामहे।
अप नः शोश्रुचदधम्॥
—Rg Veda, 1.97.2

Desiring fertile lands, desiring noble
paths, desiring plenty, we worship you with
oblations. Please destroy all our sins.

प्र यदग्नेः सहस्वतो विश्वतो यन्ति भानवः।
अप नः शोश्रुचदधम्॥
—Rg Veda, 1.97.5

The power of the conqueror of enemies,
Agni, goes everywhere. So may he destroy all
our sins.

त्वं हि विश्वतोमुख विश्वतः परिभूरसि।
अप नः शोश्रुचदधम्॥
—Rg Veda, 1.97.6

You are present everywhere. There is no
place where your face (flames) cannot go. So
please destroy all our sins.

Messages to East and West

EDITORIAL

The Old and the New

It was 30 December 1894. That day at Brooklyn, USA, Swami Vivekananda gave a momentous declaration: 'I have a message to the West as Buddha had a message to the East.' The meaning of this statement may be understood to be this: just as the Buddha taught his ideals to the eastern nations, Vivekananda's message was for the western nations.

Is this the whole thing? Is Swami Vivekananda's message meant only for the West? Have things taken shape that way? Though Swamiji's words on the surface mean this, the actual situation is quite different. Swamiji's life and message are dear to anyone who reads them, anywhere in the world. To confine his ideas to any particular region is simply impossible. Secondly, during the Buddha's time, there was no 'West' as we mean it today: the Buddha did not have any notion of such bifurcations as East and West. He simply delivered his message to the people around him whose suffering moved him, that was all. So also Swamiji's words cannot be limited to geographical limits alone. Swamiji must have meant something wider. What was that?

By 'East' and 'West' Swami Vivekananda perhaps meant the eastern mind or culture, and the western mind or culture. The word East instantly brings traditional life to mind, while by West, modern life is understood. By 'traditional', we mean following an accepted pattern of life and by 'modern' the questioning, enquiring, scientific spirit. The East is predominantly ritualistic in practice, mythological in ways of thinking, and religious in outlook, whereas the West is rationalistic in practice, scientific in thinking, and

secular in outlook—this we can assuredly say by studying history and recent trends.

The Prototype of the Eastern Mind

Before the Buddha's advent, two important practices were prevalent in India. This is accepted by almost all Buddhist and non-Buddhist scholars. These were sacrifices (*yajña*) and self-mortification. Those were the days when the Sāṃkhyan philosophers and the Yoga practitioners dominated the religious scene in India. Apart from them, there were the Vedic ritualists. We can well guess how these two groups influenced the common Indian people.

The Sāṃkhyan idea of the Puruṣa and its permanence was understood by the ignorant to mean permanence of life. (It is like the general Indian mind today: we all *know* and believe there is rebirth.) In this life, what after all does an ordinary human being seek? It is happiness and security. So, several types of sacrifices were resorted to, which were believed to bring various benefits—health, progeny, wealth, rains, and so on. These sacrifices were costly, but were assumed to be simple mathematical calculations: this plus this would invariably bring that. With such a conviction, *yajñas* became an important religious practice in pre-Buddha days. There is a wonderful verse in the *Bhāgavata* which explains this:

*Āstīrya darbhaiḥ prāgagrāiḥ
kārtsnyena kṣitimāṇḍalam;
Stabdho brhadvadhānmāni
karma nāvaiṣi yatparam.*

There are people who convert the land into a *yajña* hall by covering the whole place with *darbha* grass arranged with its seed heads pointing eastward, and by

slaughtering numerous animals. They grow proud and vain-glorious about their ritualistic performance.¹

Animal slaughter in the name of sacrifices was very commonplace. The poor masses, who could not afford such luxuries, suffered. There was pain and suffering in their lives, and these hapless creatures never knew how to be out of them. Therefore, in spite of the drive for *ānanda*, there was only suffering.

The Sāṃkhya position was this. The *Sāṃkhya Pravacana Sūtra* (sūtra 7) says: *adhyātma-adhibhutam-adhidaivam ca*. Suffering is threefold: caused by oneself, by other living beings, and by higher beings like gods (environmental hazards) etc. The later work, *Sāṃkhya Kārikā*, begins with these words: '*Duḥkha-trayābhighātāt jijñāsā*, We begin our inquiry because there is threefold misery.' What was the Sāṃkhyan solution to suffering? One must have the knowledge of the differentiation between the Self (*Puruṣa*) and the not-Self (known as *sattva-puruṣa-anyathā-khyāti*). To attain this knowledge which leads to *kaivalya*, the Sāṃkhyans practised austerities. Thus arose groups of mendicants who lived away from the world and practised terrible *tapasyā*. Yogic extremes led to self-torture. Now, being drawn between enjoyment (thereby towards the sacrificial altar) and permanence of life (thereby towards mendicancy) the public were unaware of how to overcome their numerous problems and enjoy life.

The Arrival of the Buddha

The life and message of a prophet are inseparable. His life is the practical demonstration of what he teaches. Can we learn from Gautama Buddha's life what he taught?

The Buddha's life teaches us two negative truths and two positive truths. The first negative truth is that *sense pleasures* (bhoga)

will never bring real happiness. With all the pleasures that his palace provided him, Siddhartha walked away because his trip to the city one day gave him the Perfect View (Pali, *sammā ditti*; Sanskrit, *samyag-drṣṭi*) of life. What was that perfect view? Behind all this glitter, there is disease, old age and death; life is suffering. This was the right view Siddhartha had. A mendicant whom he saw on the way back made him ponder, leading to Perfect Resolve (Pali, *sammā saṃkappa*; Sanskrit, *samyak saṃkalpa*). He determinedly returned home and told Yashodhara, his hapless wife, these decisive words: 'I see everywhere the impression of change....'² This was the Perfect Speech (Pali, *sammā vācā*; Sanskrit, *samyak vāc*). In his life too the change came—Perfect Action, his great renunciation (Pali, *sammā kammanta*; Sanskrit, *samyak karmaṇta*). What could be a greater action than a prince's renouncing the world? Leaving the palace for good, Siddhartha initially followed the popular practice and had almost killed himself owing to extremes, when the knowledge dawned upon him about Perfect Livelihood (Pali, *sammā ājīva*; Sanskrit, *samyak ājīva*). That, incidentally, was the second negative truth that Buddha's life taught: that *self-mortification is meaningless*.

Siddhartha understood that the Middle Path was the ideal way. The sweetened milk which Sujata brought saved his life and Siddhartha began to practice the middle path. If the sweetened milk could remove his bodily suffering, Buddha thought, suffering of other types—or the essential suffering—can also be removed. While the Sāṃkhyans had postulated three types of suffering mentioned above, Buddha transposed them all into one essential suffering, called it *duḥkha*, and gave the first of his positive teachings: that *essential suffering, duḥkha, can be removed*.

1. *Bhāgavata*, 4.29.49 (Swami Tapasyanandaji's translation).

2. Paul Carus, *The Gospel of Buddha* (Madras: Samata Books, 1987), p. 14. [Hereafter *Gospel of Buddha*.]

Now Siddhartha put in the Perfect Effort (Pali, *sammā vāyāma*; Sanskrit, *saṃyak vyāyāma*) needed for knowing the Truth. What was the truth that Siddhartha wanted to know? He wanted to know the path to overcome suffering—not for his own sake, but for the millions. We must never forget that Siddhartha was not scared of old age, disease or death. He was propelled by compassion for beings. Siddhartha had cogitated deeply about the cause of suffering. He was a prince, a highly qualified one, we must remember. His deep thinking, Perfect Mindfulness (Pali, *sammā sati*; Sanskrit, *saṃyak smṛti*), led him to understand the chain of causation. He understood intellectually that (a) there is *duḥkha*, (b) there is the cause of *duḥkha*, and (c) *duḥkha* can be eliminated by the removal of ignorance (*avidyā*).

Siddhartha understood thus that *avidyā* was at the root of all suffering. However, he could not quite understand how to overcome *avidyā*, for that was not within the limits of the intellect. It required a higher, enlightened, intellect (*bodhi*). Thus, through Perfect Contemplation (Pali, *sammā samādhi*; Sanskrit, *saṃyak samādhi*) he attained enlightenment (*saṃbodhi*) or awakened intellect. Through this awakened intellect, he realized the truth that *nibbāna* (Sanskrit, *nirvāṇa*) was the way to totally eliminate the roots of ignorance. What is *nirvāṇa*? This is the supreme state which is unalloyed and pure, absolutely free from *avidyā*. It is the unawakened intellect alone that is ignorant and has desires, never the awakened intellect.

Now there was peace. The Buddha enjoyed it for seven days. And then he delivered this great message to the world.

The Buddha's New Path

The Buddha had found a new path—away from self-gratification or self-mortification. It was the middle path, in harmony with the Golden Eightfold Path. He

taught how we are caught in the net of ignorance:

In the beginning there is existence blind and without knowledge [*avidyā*]; and in this sea of ignorance there are appetences formative and organising [*vi-jñāna*]. From appetences, formative and organising, rises awareness or feelings. Feelings beget organisms that live as individual beings. These organisms develop the six fields [*ṣaḍāyatana*], that is, the five senses and the mind. The six fields come in contact [*sparśa*] with things. Contact begets sensation [*vedanā*]. Sensation creates the thirst of individualised being [*trṣṇā*]. The thirst of being creates a cleaving [*upādāna*] to things. The cleaving produces the growth and continuation of selfhood [*bhāva*]. Selfhood continues in renewed births [*jāti*]. The renewed births of selfhood are the cause of suffering, old age, sickness, and death [*jarāmaraṇa*]. ... The cause of all sorrow lies at the very beginning [*avidyā*].³

This is dependent origination (*pratitya saṃutpāda*) which the Buddha discovered. It is a rational approach, a gift to the traditional eastern mind. Buddha was a rationalist in order to teach the eastern mind, which was generally given to believing in everything without questioning. He taught that inordinate faith in permanence, in liberation by sacrifices, and self-torture are no good. When the lotus blooms, bees come of themselves, says Sri Ramakrishna. When the Buddha showed the new, rational path, multitudes thronged to him and attained peace.

Thus, if the eastern mind was given to self-mortification, Buddha taught that it was useless. If it was given to self-gratification through the senses, and towards that end performed endless *yajñas*, he taught that it was unnecessary. If the eastern mind had

3. *Gospel of Buddha*, p. 31. (Sanskrit terms auded.)

existential suffering whose cause was unknown, the Buddha presented the real cause. And if it was worried about how to overcome this essential sorrow, the Buddha showed the Golden Eightfold Path which takes one away from the chain of causation. This was the Buddha then, and this was his message to the East.

The Pattern of the Western Mind

Civilizations come and go. Times change. People change. Age-old beliefs are questioned by reasoning minds. Where shall we find the western mind today? What with the communication explosion and transport boom, the world has become heterogeneous, and very small: the earth has become a global village. With the invention of the Internet, the whole world is at one's 'command' now. Today, the youth of Bangalore and Birmingham, Calcutta and California have the same set of desires and ambitions, the same styles, the same type of hobbies. The elderly in Bombay, in Bangkok or in Britain have the same worries and problems: housing, disobedient children, escalating prices, breaking families, and so on. The Y2K bug, bomb scares, terrorism, fundamentalism and so forth are some of the problems, common to all countries. This shows that the western mind simply means the whole of the present world.

We spoke of problems: where do they stem from? The first cause is pleasure-seeking. The second is the explosion of rationalism with a total disregard of tradition. The third is lack of faith in higher values. The fourth is the want of a fundamental, basic philosophy of life. T. S. Eliot wrote in *The Idea of a Christian Society* several years ago:

...the tendency of unlimited industrialization is to create bodies of men and women—of all classes—detached from tradition, alienated from religion, and susceptible to mass suggestion—in other words, a mob. And a mob will be no less a mob if it is well fed, well clothed, well

housed and well disciplined.⁴ Swami Vivekananda's advent hit the bull's eye.

Where the Buddha Ends, Swamiji Begins

As we did with the Buddha, let us see how Swamiji's life was his message to the world. Even in his case, we can read two negative truths and two positive ones from his life. Before that, we must know something about Swamiji himself. There is a remarkable incident in the life of young Narendranath:

One day when I was sitting...at the end of the meditation, I saw the wonderful figure of a monk appear suddenly—from where I did not know—and stand before me at a little distance, filling the room with divine effulgence. He was in ochre robes with a *kamandalu* (water pot) in his hand.... He walked towards me with a slow step, his eyes steadfastly fixed on me, as if he wanted to say something.... I think that I had the good fortune of seeing Lord Buddha that day.⁵

Our scriptures declare: '*Brahma-veda brahmaiva bhavati*, He who knows supreme Brahman becomes Brahman himself.'⁶ He who has seen the Buddha attains his qualities himself. That is, there was no need for Swami Vivekananda to go through all that the Buddha underwent; he could well begin where the Buddha had left. It is therefore not surprising to see rationality in Swamiji. Narendranath's upbringing, his closeness to the Brahmo Samaj, his western education—all had contributed towards making him what

4. Quoted in Johnson D. Hill and Walter E. Stuermann, *Philosophy and the American Heritage* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1961), p. 194.

5. Eastern and Western Disciples, *Life of Swami Vivekananda* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1979), Vol. 1, p. 113. [Hereafter *Life*.]

6. *Mundaka Upanishad*, 3.2.9.

one of his dear friends described as, 'a Vedantist-cum-Hegalian-cum-Revolutionary ... a born iconoclast and a free-thinker....'⁷

In spite of himself Narendranath came to Sri Ramakrishna and was influenced by him. Narendra was not an obedient and faithful eastern type of disciple. 'He must be stark mad,' was his first feeling about Sri Ramakrishna. Next, 'He is a monomaniac.'⁸ Then, 'He is mad but his utter renunciation is surprising.' Towards the end of Sri Ramakrishna's life Narendranath said, 'We think of him as a person like God. Do you know, sir, what it is like?...there is a stage between man-world and God-world where it is extremely hard to say whether a person is a man or God. That is Sri Ramakrishna.'⁹ And towards the end of his own life Swamiji declared: 'What he was, the concentrated embodiment of how many previous avatars, we could not understand a bit even, spending the whole life in religious austerities.'¹⁰ This was the development of ideas about Sri Ramakrishna in Swamiji. Under Sri Ramakrishna, Swamiji's rationality got several blows and he understood the need of faith. Gopaler Ma's visions, Sri Ramakrishna's visions themselves, and many other supernatural experiences could not be brushed aside by Swamiji as nonsense. His idea that there was a thing called blind faith was negated by Sri Ramakrishna, who said that there was either faith or faithlessness. Thus, slowly, the revolutionary in Swamiji came to terms with reality. It became clear to him that a mere rational and scientific temper, devoid of faith, does not hold water.

The first negative teaching of Swamiji's life, therefore, to the western mind is, *over-emphasis on rationality is counterproductive.*

Image Worship and the Atman Ideal

The second negative realization of Swamiji was that *image worship was not ignorance.* A strong believer in the Brahmo Samaj ideals, young Narendranath altogether gave up talking to his dear friend Rakhal when he saw the latter prostrating before the Kali image. Sri Ramakrishna had to mediate to restore peace. This very iconoclast, Narendra, ultimately accepted Mother Kali and Sri Ramakrishna experienced immense joy. Not that Sri Ramakrishna wanted his Narendra to become a traditional Hindu. He wanted that Narendra (a) should not be one-sided, and that he (b) should teach the world. To teach the present world, a narrow approach to Truth is never the way. So, when the young boy vehemently criticized certain 'dirty' practices in the name of religion, Ramakrishna heard him patiently and slowly added, 'Maybe there is a back door to religion, who knows?' Such broadness was what Ramakrishna inculcated in his beloved disciple.

What were the two positive teachings of Swamiji? The first of them was that *service to God in the human being was the greatest worship.* Speaking about his first positive teaching, Swamiji remarked: 'Serving man, knowing him to be the manifestation of God, purifies the heart, and in a short time the aspirant who does this realizes that he is a part of God—Existence, Knowledge, Bliss Absolute.'¹¹ This, according to him, was one of the greatest lessons he learnt in life under his master. The western mind, practical and scientific that it is, can never be convinced by mere theories. The teacher who teaches must be a practical man through and through. And that exactly was what Vivekananda was. One day, by the grace of his guru, he had the highest advaitic

7. Dr. Brajendranath Seal, quoted in *Life*, Vol. 1, p. 111.

8. *Life*, Vol. 1, p. 77.

9. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, trans. Swami Nikhilananda (Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1985), p. 904.

10. Swami Vivekananda, *The Complete Works*, (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989), Vol. 4, p. 400. [Hereafter *Complete Works*.]

11. *Life*, Vol. 1, p. 139.

experience which showed him that everything and everyone was God. That was his positive lesson to the world. This lesson has several corollaries: One, each soul is potentially divine. Two, to serve another is to serve the Divine. Three, the bane of modern civilization is competition: this can be eliminated with the idea of oneness of all beings. Four, it was possible for a Buddha or a Christ to show compassion to all beings. How can puny creatures like us do that? All that we can do is serve others with humility, considering everyone as God. Five, the only way modern social life, predominantly selfish and narrow that it is, can be in harmony and unity is through the Atman ideal. Six, modern psychological problems can be answered only by nurturing faith in the Atman. Seven, instead of asking modern minds, given to rationality, to believe in various gods, it is better to inspire them to have faith in their own Self. What is more, Swamiji's ideal of Karma Yoga insists that one need not believe in God at all; just serving others and having faith in oneself will suffice.

Harmony for the Global Village

The second positive teaching of Swami Vivekananda was *the harmony of religions*. This idea of religious harmony was learned from his guru, who had practised the principal faiths and had realized that all paths lead to the same goal. It will not do if we come closer only technologically through the Internet and websites (these becoming the latest toys for people to forget their actual purpose in life), or through other means of communication. We must be closer in spirit too, and this spirit is the essence of all life. Human beings live not just to earn bread and living but to realize God. So the global village should be a spiritual global village also. And this was precisely why Swamiji declared at the religious parliament in Chicago in 1893 that harmony of religions is the path of the future world. In calling for this religious harmony, Swamiji had also called for harmony in all other

fields—science, arts, sociology, humanities. There is practically no field where the ideal of harmony can be realized. Without mutual cooperation, no science can independently approach the truth.

Like the Buddha, Swamiji too had shown a new path to the western mind by giving two negative and two positive truths. If the western mind was given to a rationalistic view of life, thereby obstructing higher truths from being effective, Swamiji showed that rationalism leading to materialism is bad. If the western mind was given to iconoclasm which disregarded all traditional values owing to a little knowledge, Swamiji showed that such an attitude was simply lack of proper knowledge. What is real knowledge? Website-browsing addicts please note: 'Education is not the amount of information that is put into your brain and runs riot there, undigested, all your life.'¹² Real education is 'the manifestation of the perfection' already in us. If the western mind was given to thinking that the body and mind alone were realities, Swamiji showed that the highest reality is the Self. Finally, if the western mind was given to religious narrowness, ('The object of the peoples of Europe is to exterminate all in order to live themselves,' observes Swamiji in 'The East and the West'),¹³ a surprising attitude for a scientific generation, Swamiji said that religious harmony will be the philosophy of the times.

The Lamp and the Sun

To the conventional eastern mind, the Buddha gave a rational message, while to the rational, contemporary western mind, Swamiji gave a traditional message. The most important point to be noted here is that the rational message is absolutely traditional while the traditional message is fully rational. Ideas are broadly the same, only expressions

12. *Complete Works*, Vol. 3, p. 302.

13. *Complete Works*, Vol. 5, p. 537.

are different. This changing according to the times is how the balance is maintained: this is the establishment of dharma.

The final message of Buddha to his beloved disciple Ananda was, 'Therefore, O Ananda, be ye lamps unto yourselves. Rely on yourselves, and do not rely on external help.'¹⁴ This was a rational ideal given to the eastern mind. Towards the end of his life Swamiji wrote to his rebel child, the best model of modern western mind, Nivedita: 'If there was any truth in Sri Ramakrishna, may He take you into His leading, even as He did me, nay, a thousand times more.'¹⁵ While the

Buddha lighted the lamp (the aspirant's self), Swami Vivekananda showed the sun. This sun is the personification of all that the eastern world has discovered spiritually Sri Ramakrishna is Indian spirituality personified. This last word in tradition was given to modernity. The western mind (by which we mean the whole of modern world as stressed at the beginning of this article), by accepting the eastern tradition, can bring about a meeting of East and West, making the world a spiritual village. It is only then that the Buddha's message to the East and Swamiji's message to the West will find fulfilment. □

14. *Gospel of Buddha*, p. 206.

15. *Complete Works*, Vol. 5, p. 175.

Making a Lion out of a Lamb

Dakshineswar. 1898. The occasion was Sri Ramakrishna's birth anniversary. Sri Ramakrishna's picture had been placed upon the cement platform around the Panchavati, resting against the tree. Swami Vivekananda also sat on the same platform. Around him were several monastic and lay devotees. There were, among others, Girish Ghosh and Swami Brahmananda. T.G. Harrison, an English Buddhist from Sri Lanka, came. He was about 40 years old. He saluted Swamiji and said, 'May I have the privilege of having a guide to show me around this Dakshineswar campus?' Swamiji looked around and said, 'Who amongst you will go?' No one was ready to leave Swamiji.

A young boy by name Saileswar Basu got up and said, 'Maharaj, may I take this gentleman around?' Swamiji expressed great joy at this and said, 'Can you do it?' Saileswar nodded affirmatively. Swamiji said, 'Very well then. I want such a bold young man,' and added in English to that gentleman, 'This young man will be your guide.' Later on, Saileswar showed Mr. Harrison around. In the course of their conversation, the guide said, 'Swamiji has the power to revive a dead man to life, as it were. You see, he has inspired a timid and shy chap like me to do this guide's job.' Harrison said, 'You people see only his exterior. I think you are yet to understand his inner nature. We have seen him in America how he wept for the poor of this country.'

After going around the temples, they returned to Swamiji. Harrison told Swamiji, 'I saw everything. This boy has done a good job.' Swamiji patted Saileswar on the back as an expression of his love.

—retold from *Smritir Alois Swamiji* (Bengali)

IMAGES OF INDIA'S PAST

The Greatness of this Race

'I have had before me hundreds of cases in which a man's property, liberty and life depended upon his telling a lie, and he has refused to tell it!' exclaimed a British judge who worked for several years in India about the Indians.

A Warning...

Rufus Jones wrote in *Studies in Mystical Religion*: 'As soon as religion has closed up "the East window of divine surprise" and turned into a mechanism of habit, custom and system, it is killed.'

...and a Sane Advice

Will Durant says in *Our Oriental Heritage*: 'If the Hindus have permitted alien governments to be set over them again and again, it is partly because they did not care much who ruled or exploited them—natives or foreigners. The crucial matter was religion, not politics; the soul, not the body; endless later lives rather than this passing one.' He also said: 'Weakened by division, it [India] succumbed to invaders; impoverished by invaders it lost all power of resistance, and took refuge in supernatural delusions, and concluded that freedom of the body or the nation was hardly worth defending in so brief a life. The bitter lesson that may be drawn from this tragedy is that eternal vigilance is the price of civilization. A nation must love peace, but keep its powder dry.'

Surgical Apparatus

The excellent work, *India's Contribution to World Thought and Culture*, gives details about Indian surgery. According to it, the pre-Christian era work, *Śuśruta Saṁhitā* describes about 101 varieties of blunt instruments and 20 kinds of sharp instruments used in surgery. Forceps, tongs, scalpels, catheters, bougies, trocare, syringes, speculums, needles, saws, scissors, and a host of them are described in detail. Also given is the minutiae of how each one of the instruments is made from metal. By the 6th century BCE Indian surgeons had attained high proficiency in surgery. Śuśruta gives a clear account of cataract and other sensitive surgeries.

Inspiration Never Dies

DR. M. RAM MURTY

Though they never met, Sri Ramakrishna's indirect inspiration led to Raman's success, says the author, who is Professor of Mathematics, Queen's University, Canada.

Introduction

Sri Ramakrishna and C.V. Raman never met each other simply because Sri Ramakrishna attained *mahasamadhi* in 1886 and C.V. Raman was born in 1888. So this essay is not about to describe any physical event of a meeting between the two. Neither is it going to suggest any mystical or spiritual meeting. Rather, the idea for the essay arose while I was reading the book *Journey into Light*¹ where it is described that one Mahendra Lal Sarkar was pivotal in making available to Raman the laboratories where the latter did his Nobel Prize-winning work. Devotees of Sri Ramakrishna are familiar with Dr. Sarkar through the conversations recorded in *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*. So the connection is indirect and I thought it would be interesting to trace this connection with a view to gaining a greater understanding of the evolution of the modern scientific landscape of India.

The advent of Sri Ramakrishna is viewed as a renaissance in many ways. In India, it occurred during the time of the British. The fact that this renaissance resulted in a spiritual awakening in India is well known to all. The fact that there was a political awakening with Mahatma Gandhi leading the way in India's struggle for independence is also well known. But the fact that the advent resulted in a scientific awakening in the country is perhaps not so well known. The connection between Sri Ramakrishna and the physicist C.V. Raman, India's first Nobel laureate in science, is through the personality of Dr. Ma-

hendra Lal Sarkar. Sarkar was a famous homoeopath who treated Sri Ramakrishna for throat cancer in the last years of the paramahansa's earthly life and he appears as a colourful character in the final chapters of the *Gospel*. He forms the focal point of this essay.

Let us try and imagine the tremendous psychological pressure on the good doctor when a number of devotees were eagerly looking to him for a cure of Sri Ramakrishna's illness. He was, for the most part, forced to rely on expensive imported drugs. Sarkar must have realized even before these events that there was no avenue or opportunity for Indians to engage in scientific or medical research in India. Such musings allow us to see Sarkar's personality in a different light than that portrayed in the *Gospel*. It also enables us to see that his expectations and dreams for a future India were realized in the life of Raman and others who came after him.

Often, we tend to separate religion and science. This is only cultural superstition. Not only do we have this tendency, but we also separate religion, political science, economics and every other department of knowledge. We must first understand the true meaning of religion: it is after all, the search for truth. But then, all disciplines of knowledge, nay, even life itself, is based on this search for truth. Thus, the scientific spirit and the religious spirit are one and the same.

Sister Nivedita writes that Swami Vivekananda

...pointed out that it was by renunciation, that is to say, by sustained and determined effort, by absorption in hard problems through lonely hours, by choosing toil and

1. G. Venkataraman, *Journey into Light: Life and Science of C.V. Raman* (Penguin Books, 1994.)

refusing ease, that Stephenson, for instance, invented the steam engine. He pointed out that the science of medicine represented as strong a concentration of man's mind upon healing as would be required for a cure by prayer or by thought. He made us feel that all study was an austerity directed to a given end of knowledge.²

Swami Vivekananda wrote:

Human knowledge is not antagonistic to human well-being. On the contrary, it is knowledge alone that will save us in every department of life — in knowledge is worship. The more we know the better for us.³

What characterizes the scientific spirit is embodied in the Upanishadic idea of *sraddha* usually translated into English as 'faith'. The scientist must have faith at least in two dimensions: one, that there is a pattern in the universe and second, that he has the ability to unravel this pattern. Any scientist who embarks on an investigation without this faith is doomed to failure. Only the optimist can make discoveries, said a famous mathematician. Or, as Virgil wrote, 'They can who think they can.' One must have such faith not only in science, but also in daily life. If we use this criterion, we find that Sri Ramakrishna had this scientific spirit almost to an infinite degree in his phenomenal search for God. Not only so, he tried to instil the scientific spirit into all of his disciples. Test and experiment were part of his method of teaching. Through experiment, which is the basis of the scientific method, he discovered the fundamental unity of all religions.

Though the scientific method was described already in the Upanishadic literature, it is only in the lives of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda that we see it brought out and made explicit both in the religious

and intellectual spheres. Vivekananda embodies in many ways, the 'Renaissance Man', a perfect synthesis of the eastern spiritual tradition and the western intellectual tradition. Thus, to gain a clearer understanding of the topic under discussion, it may be instructive to recall the intellectual milieu in India before the advent of Sri Ramakrishna.

Science and Scholarship in India before Sri Ramakrishna

India is a land of ancient civilizations and through the ages has produced many great savants, scholars and religious preceptors. Since the days of the Vedic sages, literature, art and architecture have always flourished. There are documented records of contacts with Europe, the Middle East, China, and even Indonesia. Inevitably, the sciences also took root and until the European Renaissance, Indian science was about as good as any, elsewhere.

Europe went through a dark age and came out enlightened. Leonardo da Vinci, Galileo and Newton stand out as embodiments of the new age and outlook. In India, there were no major upheavals such as the Dark Ages. However, when Europe galloped ahead after the Renaissance, India slipped behind. Since science had not yet been wedded to technology even in Europe, this lag did not hurt India that much at the beginning. For a while, Indian products continued to be comparable to those made in Europe and were sometimes, as in the case of the Dacca muslin, even superior. This may be the reason why there was an attempt by the British to incapacitate the weavers of the silk industry. There are records of shipbuilding in India for the British during the European Renaissance. But the Industrial Revolution struck a sharp blow and changed all that. India was now left quite far behind, a position from which she is still struggling to emerge.

The fact that the plunder of Bengal by the British financed the Industrial Revolution in England is now well known. The English his-

2. Sister Nivedita, *The Master as I Saw Him* (Calcutta: Udbodhan Office, 1963), pp. 18-19.

3. Swami Vivekananda, *The Complete Works* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1989), p. 355.

torians E. Thompson and G.T. Garrett write:

A gold-lust unequalled since the hysteria that took hold of the Spaniards of Cortes' and Pizarro's age filled the English mind. Bengal in particular was not to know peace again until she had been bled white.⁴

The American writer, Brooks Adams gives a precise description of how this plunder translated into 'progress' in England:

The influx of Indian treasure, by adding considerably to the nation's cash capital, not only increased its stock of energy, but added much to its flexibility and the rapidity of its movement. Very soon after Plassey, the Bengal plunder began to arrive in London, and the effect appears to have been instantaneous, for all authorities agree that the 'industrial revolution' began with the year 1770.⁵

Nehru adds:

The result of all this, even in its early stages, was the famine of 1770 which swept away over a third of the population of Bengal and Bihar.... This process was called trade later on, but that made little difference. Government was this so-called trade and trade was plunder. There are few instances in history of anything like it. And it must be remembered that this lasted, under various names and under different forms, not for a few years but for generations.... It is significant that one of the Hindustani words which has become part of the English language is 'loot.'⁶

Though the British came to India to colonize it, and thereby financed the Industrial Revolution, a microscopic few realized that it was an immense storehouse of knowledge and wisdom. It was in such a historical context that the first major scientific society was

founded. On 15 January 1784, the Asiatic Society of Bengal was created by 30 European intellectuals. The moving spirit was Sir William Jones, a judge of the Supreme Court at Fort William in Bengal. Jones was a scholar of repute and already a Fellow of the Royal Society when he came to India in 1783.

In subsequent years, the Asiatic Society proclaimed the glories of the Sanskrit language and set itself to the task of translating into English, literary works such as Kalidasa's *Shakuntalam* and Jayadeva's *Gita Govinda*. In 1832, the Society started publishing a journal entitled *The Journal of the Asiatic Society*. The early issues were mostly devoted to the study of Indian literature but later, there were a few papers of a scientific nature. For example, J.C. Bose, the famous biologist, published his first paper in this journal in May 1895. Another important contribution of the journal was the translation of Baudhayana's *Sulva Sutras* by G. Thibaut in 1875. In several scholarly papers, the mathematician and historian Abraham Seidenberg⁷ traces the origins of Pythagoras' theorem to the *Sulva Sutras*. A conservative estimate of the date of these *sutras* is 800 BC, which is two centuries before Pythagoras.

The Asiatic Society was a small beginning. It must have become quite famous in its time. There are a few references to it even in the *Gospel*. For instance, on page 871, Sri Ramakrishna says, 'At once there flashed into my mind the Museum of the Asiatic Society, and a human skeleton strung together with wire. I said to Her [the Divine Mother], "Please tighten the wire of my body like that, so that I may go about singing Your name and glories."'

Though the goals of the Asiatic Society were scholarly, it was not the avenue through which the new scientific ideas spreading

4. *Rise and Fulfilment of British Rule in India* (London, 1935).

5. *The Law of Civilization and Decay* (1928), pp. 259-60.

6. *The Discovery of India*, p. 296.

7. See A. Seidenberg, 'Did Euclid's Elements, Book I, Develop Geometry Axiomatically?' in *Archive for the History of Exact Sciences* (1975), Vol. 14, No. 4, pp. 263-95.

across Europe entered India. Neither was it through the educational system.

Perhaps, it is instructive to recall the so-called educational system in place during that time. The system of education introduced by the rulers was only to produce clerks to serve in the British Government of India. Sri Ramakrishna had correctly described it as a 'mere bread-winning education.' Certainly, there was no opportunity for learning and for the expansion of the human mind under such a stifling and suffocating environment. In fact, we know now that there were hidden motives behind this so-called education, the most important one being the psychological, spiritual and cultural uprooting of India. Indeed, Macaulay introduced the English language and changed the curriculum in all of the schools as of 1836. He wrote:

The effect of this education on the Hindoos is prodigious. No Hindoo, who has received an English education, ever remains sincerely attached to his religion. Some continue to profess it as a matter of policy; but many profess themselves as pure Deists, and some embrace Christianity. It is my firm belief that, if our plans are followed up, there will not be a single idolater among the respectable classes in Bengal thirty years hence.⁸

We can now understand how these attitudes had penetrated into the Brahmo Samaj since the subject of idolatry was a recurring theme in many of the talks of Swami Vivekananda.

The story of how western education had penetrated into India is a fascinating one. In the early 19th century, there were hardly any organized schools. Learning was the prerogative of a privileged few. Seeing such a predicament, the great social reformer Raja Ram Mohan Roy began an English medium school for Hindu boys. Later, this school became known as the Hindu College and the nucleus

of the present Presidency College in Calcutta. Roy also petitioned the then Governor-General to encourage instruction in scientific subjects.

In 1834, Macaulay came to India and recommended the use of English as a medium of instruction and the promotion of Western learning. In 1854, Lord Halifax prepared a document recommending the 'diffusion of improved arts, science, philosophy and the literature of Europe.' Thus, in 1857, three universities were set up—in Calcutta, Madras and Bombay—patterned on the London University. However lofty the recommendations may have read, the main motivation of the English educators was to produce an army of bureaucrats and to undermine the Indian cultural foundations. Thus, by the close of the 19th century, there were about 200 colleges, mostly in big cities and towns with the hidden purpose of churning out clerks for the British government. One can hardly call this a system of education, much less the environment for the growth of science and research.

Nevertheless, the college or university was the only place where a youngster could acquaint himself with the journals and books that made their way to the libraries. These journals contained the new scientific ideas flowing out of Europe at that time. Still, the university was the small opening that allowed a few to acquaint themselves with the new trends of thought and to participate in the adventure of scientific research. It took decades for the Indian public to adjust itself to this new scheme of things. Slowly, one began hearing of Indians entering the professional fields such as law, medicine, and engineering. Gradually, people began hearing the names of Sir J.C. Bose and Sir P.C. Ray for example. But they constituted of only a handful, hardly a critical mass for the vast millions comprising India. Thus, Indian science, at the end of the 19th century was a set of scattered individuals. There were no great laboratories to boast about, no centres of excellence, no institutes of fundamental research. There

8. *The Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay*, pp. 329-30. The letter is dated, Calcutta, 12 October 1836.

were at best a few fledgling scientific institutions and often one-man shows. While Europe had built a broad scientific base and tradition exemplified by giants such as Newton, Gauss and Reimann, all that India could manage at the end of the 19th century was a faint beginning in physics. All of this was under the cloud of foreign domination. It was into such a setting that Raman wandered in 1907. Purely by dint of his personal dynamism and genius, he built up a thriving school of physics where none had existed before.

When we read comments made by Vivekananda on the system of education in India, we must understand that he was referring to the prevailing system of that time. English education was the only means that an individual could raise himself and be counted in the eyes of the British. This fact set up a very debilitating psychological and sociological trend in the minds of the Indian people. For them, English education opened a magic door and all of a sudden they could not only become a clerk, or a petty official like a tax collector (*tahsildar*), but also a teacher, a lawyer, a doctor, or an engineer. The majority of the people who were educated became civil servants. In fact, it was considered a distinction to join the Indian Civil Service.

In the middle of this cultural milieu, there were, however, some signs of a renaissance. There was of course a spiritual revival in the personality of Sri Ramakrishna. There was also a political awakening. The noted chemist of that time, Sir P.C. Ray writes:

There was ferment all around. A new world had been opened out: new aspirations were awakened. Roused from a period of stupor and stagnation, young Bengal began to realize that there were immense possibilities in the Hindu nation.

No one symbolized this resurgent spirit better than Swami Vivekananda. But there were others too like Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Rabindranath Tagore, Mahatma Gandhi and Sri Aurobindo. In the early 1900s, science was

also awakening. In mathematics, Srinivasa Ramanujan attained international recognition by his work in the number theory. J.C. Bose was recognized by the Royal Society of England for his work in biology. In the domain of physics, there was Homi Bhabha in Bombay, Meghnad Saha in Calcutta and C.V. Raman in Madras, slowly emerging on the Indian scientific scene.

The Early Years of Raman

C.V. Raman was one of eight children: five sons and three daughters. He was born on 7 November 1888 in his maternal grandparents' house in Tiruvanaikkaval situated in the southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu. Raman was the second son; before him came Subramanian in 1886, the year that Sri Ramakrishna attained *mahasamadhi*. (The son of Subramanian was Subramanian Chandrasekhar, known later to the world as an outstanding astrophysicist and the discoverer of implosion of stars that create black holes. For this, Chandrasekhar was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1983.) Raman was given the name Venkataraman after the Lord of Seven Hills in Tirupati.

When Raman was four years old, his father moved to Visakhapatnam (in the southern Indian state of Andhra Pradesh) to take up a lecturer's job at the Mrs. A.V. Narasimha Rao's College. He taught physics, mathematics and physical geography. He was also a good athlete and took an active part in sports. He was good at the violin, was an avid reader and had a craze for collecting many good books. Raman describes how this influenced him: 'A good home and a good school may be judged by the kind of books they put in the way of the growing young person for him to feed his mind and emotions upon.' Raman's comments are relevant even today when children are fed with television and computer games, instead of the spiritual and intellectual ideas of the world.

Unlike his father, Raman was not physically strong. However, what he lacked in

physical ability, he made up for on the intellectual side. He excelled in all of his studies and gave early signs of unusual talent by winning numerous prizes and scholarships. Even when he was in the early grades, he developed an interest in physics and once built a dynamo all by himself. Perhaps this was symbolic of the dynamo of a personality that he was to become.

At the young age of 11, Raman passed the Matriculation examination, standing first, of course. He joined the Mrs. A.V.N. College, where his father was teaching, to study in the intermediate class. In 1903, he was off to Madras with a scholarship to study for the BA degree in the Presidency College. He was only 15.

The Presidency College was the elite college in southern India. In Raman's days, all the professors were Europeans. There, Raman's interests became focussed. Besides an interest in physics, he developed a great love for English literature, a love shared by his nephew Subramanian Chandrasekhar. Raman passed his BA examination in 1904 at the age of sixteen obtaining the first rank in the university and winning gold medals in English and Physics. His teachers suggested he go to England for further studies. But apparently he had to undergo a medical examination by the Civil Surgeon before he could be certified to travel to England. The Civil Surgeon ruled out travelling abroad saying that Raman was too young and frail, that he would not be able to stand the rigours of the English climate. One recalls the later experience of Srinivasa Ramanujan, who contracted tuberculosis while in England and subsequently died because of that. So Raman did not go abroad (until he was thirty-three).

Therefore, Raman enrolled in the MA class in the Presidency College in Madras to study physics. The professor of physics at the time was one R.L. Jones. Raman writes:

Jones believed in letting those capable of looking after themselves to do so, with the result that during the first four years that

I was at the Presidency College, I enjoyed a measure of academic freedom which seems almost incredible. To mention only one detail, during the whole of my two years' work for the MA degree, I remember attending only one lecture.

There was not much available at the university by way of scientific equipment. There was the usual assortment of lenses and prisms needed for class work in optics, but nothing more. For Raman, this was enough. Guided by insatiable curiosity, he posed himself many questions and performed suitable experiments to answer them. Many of these questions were not discussed in the then published scientific literature. Thus, instinctively, he had discovered the essence of research and the spirit of enquiry. He learned that research begins with questioning and wonder.

His first experiment was the study of diffraction patterns when light strikes a surface obliquely. The standard treatment of diffraction patterns treats only light striking a surface perpendicularly. Even though this was a small variation on existing knowledge, there were new findings and Raman wrote these up in the form of a manuscript. When he gave it to Professor Jones for comments, the latter kept it for several months and offered no opinion. Perhaps he never read it. So taking courage, Raman sent the paper on his own to the *Philosophical Magazine* in London under the title 'Unsymmetrical Diffraction Bands Due to a Rectangular Aperture'. This paper was published in 1904 when Raman was barely eighteen and out of college. It was not a great paper, but was sufficiently original to merit publication. At the time, Presidency College had no tradition of original research and this was the first paper ever to come out of the institution.

Books in physics were not the only books that inspired Raman in the development of his scientific talent. Raman writes:

A purposeful life needs an axis or hinge to which it is firmly fixed and yet around which it can freely revolve. As I see it, this

axis or hinge has been, in my own case, strangely enough, not the love of science, not even the love of Nature but a certain abstract idealism or belief in the value of the human spirit and the virtue of human endeavour and achievement. The nearest point to which I can trace this source of idealism is my reading Edwin Arnold's great book, *The Light of Asia*. I remember being powerfully moved by the story of Siddhartha's great renunciation, of his search for truth, and of his final enlightenment. This was at a time when I was young enough to be impressionable and this reading of the book fixed firmly in my mind the idea that this capacity for renunciation in the pursuit of exalted aims is the very essence of human greatness. This is not an unfamiliar idea to us in India, but it is not always easy to live up to. It has always seemed to me a surprising and regrettable fact that the profound teaching of the Buddha has not left a deeper impression in the life of the country of which he was the greatest son that ever lived.

Obviously, the Buddha made such a deep impression on Raman that in later life he made frequent references to the life of the great sage. On receiving the Nobel Prize in 1930, Raman spoke of the glories of ancient India and spoke of the great renunciation of the Buddha, the royal ascetic and world teacher, and of his message of non-violence and love which embraced all creation.

Raman obtained his MA degree in 1907, topping as usual and walking away with all the prizes. His heart was clearly in science but there were no opportunities for a research career in India (for Indians)! Since going to England was ruled out on health grounds, government service remained the only attractive option for him. It was safe, secure and prestigious. The Indian Civil Service required at least one year of study in England for its entry, so even this was ruled out. The only other option was the Financial Civil Service, which was the forerunner of the Indian Audit

and Accounts Service. Raman's brother, Subramanian, was already a member of the Financial Civil Service and so preparing for it was easy enough. Still, one had to appear for an interview. Raman was duly screened and as expected, he stood first even though he had to study subjects like history and economics, subjects that he was totally unfamiliar with at that time.

Thus, at the age of nineteen, Raman passed his FCS examination and while still awaiting posting, was married to Lokasundari. In the middle of 1907, he was posted in Calcutta as an assistant accountant-general, at a salary of 400 rupees a month. The events in his life seem paradoxical. To achieve success and recognition, everyone in India travelled west. Raman went east. Instead of entering the scientific field, he entered government service. Thus, he was all set to disappear into obscurity and oblivion. But he did not. Divine Providence had intervened.

Mahendra Lal Sarkar

The remarkable aspect of Raman's illustrious scientific activities in Calcutta was that he never met the person who made it possible. It was Dr. Mahendra Lal Sarkar.

Sarkar was born in 1833. He received his early education at the Hare School and the Hindu College, the one started by Raja Ram Mohan Roy. Later, he joined the Calcutta Medical College and obtained his MD in 1863 (the year in which Swami Vivekananda was born) standing first in the order of merit. He was deeply nationalistic in his outlook. He allowed his interests to range far outside of the medical world. This is evident in the conversations recorded between him and Sri Ramakrishna in the *Gospel*. Even though very busy, he would often spend hours with the Paramahansa, rapt in spiritual discussion. When Narendra (the future Vivekananda) would sing for Sri Ramakrishna, Sarkar's eyes would be filled with tears.

Mahendra Lal Sarkar was deeply concerned that the system of education intro-

duced by the British laid greater stress on arts than on science. He realized that the future of any nation relied on the development of science. Since there were hardly any opportunities for Indians to pursue advanced science, he felt the need to find ways for the cultivation of science. (There were a few government centres for advanced studies and research but they were closed to Indians.) Thus, in 1869, he wrote an article in the *Calcutta Journal of Medicine* entitled, 'On the Desirability of a National Institution for the Cultivation of Science by the Natives of India'. After discussing the achievements of ancient India, the article describes the prevailing backwardness of the country. As a doctor, he was acutely aware that cholera and typhoid were still rampant because of lack of pure water or any process of filtering water. The public was still unaware of the spread of germs through lack of hygiene. He felt that research must be done to spread scientific education across the country. He wrote:

We want an institution which will combine the character, the scope, and objectives of the Royal Institution of London or the British Association for the Advancement of Science. We want an institution which shall be for the instruction of the masses, where lectures on scientific subjects will be systematically delivered and not only illustrative experiments performed by the lecturers, but the audience would be invited and taught to perform them themselves. And we wish that the institution be entirely under native management and control.

In January 1870, he published a prospectus in the *Hindoo Patriot*, a newspaper of that time. The response was overwhelming with several leading persons making large contributions. These were the beginnings of the Indian Association for the Cultivation of Science. However, the project did not get off the ground till six years later. In February 1876, the Government of Bengal offered the premises of 210 Bow Bazar Street for the project. In

July 1876, lectures in physics and physiology were delivered by Sarkar and others. There are a few references to the Association and Sarkar's work in this regard in the *Gospel*. For instance, on page 922, Dr. Sarkar presented M. with one of his books, *The Physiological Basis of Psychology*, when the latter visited him at his house on Saturday, 31 October 1885, to report on the condition of Sri Ramakrishna. On page 904, it is recorded that Girish Ghosh and Dr. Sarkar began a talk about the Science Association established by the latter. On page 908, in a conversation with M., the doctor refers to a gentleman of the Tagore family, who donated 32,500 rupees to the Association.

In 1891, a large donation from the Maharajah of Vijayanagaram allowed them to build a new laboratory. Sarkar dreamt of large scale research being carried out at the new laboratories. However, teaching was still the main activity of the Association with lectures given by various scientists.

One of these was Sir Asutosh Mukherjee who later became Raman's teacher. He was a lawyer and judge of the Calcutta High Court but also a gifted mathematician and member of the Asiatic Society. Other eminent people like J.C. Bose and P.C. Ray also lectured at the Association. Still, research did not take root. In 1902, Sarkar lamented, 'I do not know how to account for this apathy of our people towards the cultivation of science. And therefore, I am forced to confess that I made a mistake in starting the project....' In 1903, he was very ill when he wrote:

...if our country is to advance at all and take rank and share her responsibilities with the civilized nations of the world, it can only be by means of science and positive learning of God's works. To this end, I have given the best portion of my life, but I am sorry to leave this world with the impression that my labours have not met with success.... Younger men should come and step in to take my place and work with more energy than I.

As the *Gita* assures us, no sincere effort is a waste. Even though Mahendra Lal Sarkar passed away in February 1904, his last wish was fulfilled in 1907, when Raman began his experiments at the Vijayanagaram Laboratories. It was at these very laboratories that he did his Nobel Prize-winning work.

Raman in Calcutta

When in 1907 Raman moved with his young wife to Calcutta to take up his government job in the Financial Civil Service, he was unaware that Divine Providence had other plans. One day, while riding a tram to work, he spotted a signboard 'Indian Association for the Cultivation of Science'. His curiosity was aroused and on his way back, he stopped to investigate. It was a historic meeting when the secretary of the Association, Asutosh Dey, opened the door. Dey led him to Amrita Lal Sarkar, the nephew of Mahendra Lal Sarkar. Raman then explained that though he was in government service, he was keen on pursuing research in his spare time and by way of credentials, cited his research and publications he had completed while in college. Raman was barely twenty at the time. Amrita could not believe his ears. His uncle had endlessly appealed for researchers to use the facilities of the Association. How happy his uncle would have been. All these years the magnificent laboratories were lying idle and gathering dust. Amrita shed silent tears in memory of his departed uncle and emotionally spoke to Raman saying, 'All these years we have been waiting for a person like you.'

Thus, Raman plunged into a hectic double life, working at the Accounts Office from 10 am to 5 pm and then plunging into science during every spare moment he could find. His wife, Lokasundari, described his daily routine as follows:

He woke up at 5:30 am and left for the labs. He returned home at 9:45 am; he bathed, gulped his food in haste and left for the office by taxi so as not to be late. At 5 pm, Raman went directly to the labs from the

office. At 9:30 pm or 10 pm he returned home. Sundays, he spent the whole day at the lab. Truly, not an exciting life for a young bride.

But his wife launched on her own programme of self-education. She quickly acquired an ability to converse and write in English, which is a considerable achievement because girls of that period barely received any formal education. Meanwhile, Raman felt that he was wasting quite a bit of time commuting from his house to the labs, so he and Lokasundari moved into a house adjoining the labs, even though that locality was not suitable for residence. He even had a door put in connecting his house to the labs so that if he had any moments of inspiration in the middle of the night, he could investigate it right there and then instead of waiting till morning.

Raman's first piece of major research was in the study of vibrations and the study of musical instruments, including those of Indian origin. He believed that scientific research is useless unless the experimental findings along with their scientific conclusions were promptly published. Because of this quality, the physicists around the world became aware of Raman's work. The first paper written by any member of the IACS (Indian Association for the Cultivation of Science) was by Raman. His first decade there resulted in 27 publications. These publications got him recognition. He won the Curzon Research Prize in 1912, the Woodburn Research Medal in 1913, and all this while he was still a government officer.

The visibility of the Association increased through research in chemistry and biology by other scientists who came forth to work there. The Association started its own publication. Raman lectured extensively. He always held his audience spellbound with his booming voice, superb diction, lively demonstrations and rich humour. In 1916, *Nature* wrote praising the scientific work and research being conducted by the Association.

At that time, Asutosh Mukherjee was the Vice-Chancellor of Calcutta University. Mukherjee seized that opportunity to improve the scientific education of the university and so, he created distinguished chairs in each of the sciences. These were called the Palit Professorships, named after Sir Taraknath Palit, who was the donor of the chair. He invited P.C. Ray to take the Palit chair in chemistry. He also appointed S.N. Bose (who later collaborated with Einstein), Meghnad Saha and S.K. Mitra. Raman was invited to occupy the Palit chair in physics at a salary of 600 rupees a month. Though Raman was already earning 1100 rupees a month as a government officer, he was eager to accept the professorship. The government was not happy with this, so they offered Raman a membership in the Viceroy's Council (this was almost like becoming a member of the Cabinet). Still Raman refused and he entered the academic world in 1917 taking a huge pay cut by almost 50 per cent. The Indian Association for the Cultivation of Science became the research arm of the Calcutta University.

Raman's publications and research earned him the recognition of the Royal Society of England. He was elected Fellow in 1924 at the age of 36. He was the fourth Indian to be so elected. He went to England that year to be inducted as Fellow of the Society. (For this he didn't have to undergo a medical examination by the Civil Surgeon again!) On his way back from England, sailing across the Mediterranean, he began to muse, 'Why is the sky blue? Why is the sea blue? Why does the sea take on different hues in different parts of the world?' These questions, according to Raman, had never been answered satisfactorily by physics. There was the theory of light scattering, due to Raleigh, describing what happens to light in the higher strata of the atmosphere which accounts for the wavelength of light which we see as blue. The colour of the ocean, according to Raleigh, is due to the reflection of the light of the sky and the absorption of light by the water. This

explanation did not satisfy Raman.

After returning from England, Raman began a series of experiments to test whether Raleigh Scattering explained everything. In 1928, he made a fundamental discovery of the molecular scattering of light, which is known today as the Raman Effect. It was this piece of work that earned him the Nobel Prize. It is interesting to note that in 1928, Raman's nephew, Chandrasekhar, started his first experimental work at IACS and wrote his first paper, 'Thermodynamics of the Compton Effect in the Interior of Stars'.

In 1932, the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) in Bangalore was looking for a new director to replace Sir Martin Foster. The Tata family, the main benefactor of the Institute, wrote to the physicist Rutherford, famous for the discovery of the nucleus of the atom, to nominate a successor. Rutherford wrote back saying that Raman was the man for the job. But then, who would take charge of the IACS? A chair was established in the name of Mahendra Lal Sarkar, and Meghnad Saha was appointed to this chair and to take over as the director of IACS. Thus, in 1932, Raman left Calcutta and arrived at Bangalore to take the directorship of the IISc.

Raman passed away in 1970, but left a remarkable legacy of scientific research in India. Much of this research was possible because Mahendra Lal Sarkar had a dream. The lesson that we can learn is that if we have a noble aspiration and a prayerful attitude combined with perseverance, then our dream will be realized in time. Sarkar wanted research institutions in India. There are now many, most notably the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR), the Raman Institute and the Indian Institute of Science in Bangalore, the Mehta Research Institute in Allahabad and the Institute of Mathematical Sciences in Madras.

It is the scientific spirit that we find in the life of Sri Ramakrishna. Indeed, he observed the prevailing religious traditions. He rea-

(continued on page 731)

A Problem in the Epistemology of Advaita Vedanta?

DR. ARVIND SHARMA

Prof. Arvind Sharma of McGill University, Montreal, has pointed out a problem in Advaita Vedanta epistemology, and several professors of philosophy have commented on it. Advaita Vedanta contains two theories: normal perception (pratyakṣa) and misperception (anirvacanīya khyāti). Is there any contradiction between the two?

I

The purpose of this note is to identify an apparent contradiction within the philosophy of Advaita Vedanta, which to the best of my knowledge has hitherto gone unnoticed.¹ In order to identify it, three distinct steps are required.

II

The first step consists in recognizing that within Advaita Vedanta, the external reality of objects is clearly conceded at the empirical level. This constitutes its main distinction from the Vijñānavāda of Buddhism, which maintains that 'ideas themselves appear as external objects'. Advaita Vedanta is sometimes considered akin to this school of Buddhist thought.² Chandradhar Sharma, however, pinpoints its distinction from Vijñānavāda with great clarity by pointing out that 'Shankara vehemently criticizes this view. According to him it is subjective ideal-

ism. And the tragedy is heightened by the fact that ideas are regarded as momentary. Shankara's standpoint here is that of *psychological realism* which is compatible with Absolute Idealism. The external world must exist because we perceive it. If things and ideas are presented together it does not mean they are identical. If objects depend on the mind it does not mean that they are a part of the mind. To be perceived by the mind is not to be a portion of the mind. The arguments of the Buddhist in denying the external world, though he is himself experiencing it, are like the words of a person who while he is eating and feeling satisfied, says he is not eating or feeling satisfied. We perceive a black cow and a white cow. Now, the attributes of blackness and whiteness may differ but cowness remains the same. Similarly in 'cognition of a jar' and 'cognition of a cloth', jar and cloth being objects differ while consciousness remains the same. This proves that ideas and objects are distinct.³ Thus Sankara's 'point is simply to reject subjective idealism and to emphasize the phenomenal reality of the ex-

1. See Bina Gupta, *Perceiving in Advaita Vedanta: Epistemological Analysis and Interpretation* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1991); *Advaita Vedanta up to Śaṅkara and His Pupils*, ed. Karl Potter (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1981), pp. 92-100; etc.

2. Surendranath Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951), Vol. I, p. 494.

3. Chandradhar Sharma, *A Critical Survey of Indian Philosophy* (London: Rider & Company, 1960), p. 267. Also see M. Hiriyanna, *Outlines of Indian Philosophy* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1932), p. 351. Both rely on Śaṅkara's gloss on the *Brahma Sūtras* (2.2.20-32).

ternal world.'⁴

III

The second step consists in recognizing a key element in the Advaitic theory of error, namely, that when the rope is mistaken for a snake the *snake is regarded as actually present for the duration of the error*. The Advaitin 'accepts an objective factor or counterpart in all knowledge *completely* corresponding to its content, and error is no exception to this rule. That is to say, all knowledge as such points to an object beyond it.'⁵

Such a view seems implausible from the standpoint of commonsense but that does not prevent Advaitins from advocating it. Thus M. Hiriyanna states: 'This explanation has one great merit. It accounts for illusion as it occurs. What we experience in it is that we see the serpent...and this fact of knowing an object as present then and there is not explained, but is rather explained away in other theories of illusion.'⁶ Elsewhere Hiriyanna endorses the view even more emphatically when he says: 'There seem to be strictly but two views in regard to the implication of knowledge—either to deny, like the Yogācāra school of Buddhism, that it ever points to an object outside or to admit that it does so always. To postulate the object where knowledge is true while denying it either directly or indirectly where knowledge is erroneous is self-contradictory.'⁷

IV

The next point to recognize is that this object is said to last as long as its knowledge lasts. Objects given in common experience 'exist prior to their being known, and con-

tinue to do so afterwards. An illusory object, on the other hand, endures only so long as its knowledge lasts.'⁸ This point is a simple one but vital for our argument.

V

The third step which needs to be taken, before the contradiction can be identified, is related to the Advaitic theory of perception and its doctrine of representative presentation (*vṛtti-jñāna*). The exact manner in which perception takes place according to this view may be 'stated as follows: When an organ of sense is brought into contact with an object, the *antaḥkāraṇa*, like a searchlight as it were, goes out towards it and gets itself determined by it or assumes the 'form' of that object. *The existence of the object previous to the appearance of knowledge is thus necessary* so that psychologically the theory is realistic.'⁹ All three accounts of how perception occurs—*āvaraṇa-bhaṅga*, *ciduparāga* or *abhedābhivyakti* (or their synthesis) assume the existence of object prior to knowledge.¹⁰

VI

The contradiction can now be identified. Mistaking a rope for a snake involves a *misperception* and the snake is supposed to last only for the duration of its knowledge. However, the Advaitic theory of perception requires 'the existence of the object *previous* to the appearance of knowledge.'¹¹

The point is of the utmost importance because if the illusory object of perception

4. Chandradhar Sharma, op.cit., p. 268.

5. M. Hiriyanna, *The Essentials of Indian Philosophy* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1948), p. 166. Also see *Vedānta Paribhāṣā*, 6.43.

6. M. Hiriyanna, *Outlines of Indian Philosophy*, p. 351.

7. Ibid., p. 349.

8. M. Hiriyanna, *The Essentials of Indian Philosophy*, p. 166.

9. M. Hiriyanna, *Outlines of Indian Philosophy*, pp. 345-46, emphasis added.

10. William M. Indich, *Consciousness in Advaita Vedānta* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1980), pp. 70-71. Also see John Grimes, 'Some Problems in the Epistemology of Advaita' in *Philosophy East and West* 41.3.297 (July 1991).

11. M. Hiriyanna, *Outlines of Indian Philosophy*, p. 345, emphasis added.

does not exist prior to its perception it could easily be considered a projection.

There is thus clearly a contradiction between the Advaitic theory of perception and the Advaitic theory of knowledge. Are we to put this contradiction down to the fact that

12. Ibid., p. 346, note 2.

13. N.K. Devraj in his book *An Introduction to Śaṅkara's Theory of Knowledge* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1962) suggested that the Advaitic theory of representative knowledge is dispensable (p. 100). However, the problem identified here does not constitute the basis of his suggestion. As William M. Indich points out (op.cit., p. 73, note 1): 'It is interesting to note that at least one contemporary commentator on Advaitic epistemology has argued that the going out of the *antahikaraṇa* to the

'the theory of perception adopted by Advaita Vedānta is rather crude on the scientific side'¹² or is there a way to resolving the contradiction? I am happy to leave the matter in the hands of the reader.¹³

object is found neither in the works of Śaṅkara or Padmapāda, has little metaphysical significance, and could be eliminated from the Advaitic theory of perception without great loss.... The willingness to modify this aspect of the Advaitic theory of perception, which seems to be rather central, might reflect the attempt of some contemporary Vedāntins to bring their theories in line with recent scientific developments concerning perception.'

COMMENTS

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The difficulty arises because of Hiriyanna's standard but potentially misleading use of the term 'know' to mean both mere awareness (being aware of a content) and veridical awareness (being truly aware of an actual object). When Hiriyanna says 'all knowledge...points to an object beyond' he has in mind any (mere) awareness (true or false) which has a content (*saviṣaya*). Now the Advaita theory of perception requires 'the existence of an object previous to an appearance of knowledge', that is, Advaita holds that there must be something (at the appropriate level) that his awareness concerns. (That will always be the case since even at the highest level Brahman exists.) However, it does not follow that he knows (ie, veridically cognizes, is truly aware of) anything at all, and thus it does not follow that the object he is aware of (the snake) must actually exist (which is what

Sharma mistakenly concludes; if he does not conclude that, I fail to see how the alleged contradiction arises). Nor does it follow that, because the snake did not exist prior to the awareness of it, that the (relevant) object did not exist 'previous to the appearance of knowledge', for the relevant object in the case in question is the rope, which only appears to be a snake, and *did* exist previous to the awareness!

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Professor Arvind Sharma of McGill University says that he has identified a contradiction within the philosophy of Advaita Vedānta which 'has hitherto gone unnoticed.' The contradiction, he holds, lies in the Advaita explanation of valid perception and illusory perception. In the case of valid percep-

tion 'the existence of the object previous to the appearance of knowledge' is required, but in the case of false perception this is impossible as no false object exists before its perception. This is what Prof. Sharma opines.

Prof. Sharma has referred to Chandradhar Sharma, M. Hiriyanna and such other authors of textbooks on Indian philosophy. These writers have discussed the different systems of Indian philosophy in brief and not in detail. In none of these books is the Advaita theory of perception presented as we find it in the *Vedānta Paribhāṣā*, which is generally regarded as a dependable text on Advaita epistemology. It is a fact that all the views expressed in the *Vedānta Paribhāṣā* are not accepted by such authorities of Advaita Vedānta as Padmapāda, Prakāśātma Yati and Madhusūdana Sarasvatī in their books like *Pañcapādikā*, *Vivaraṇa* and *Advaitasiddhi* respectively. But for the solution of the problem pointed out by Prof. Arvind Sharma, I think, a reference to the *Vedānta Paribhāṣā* is enough. My humble submission in this context is that no one should criticize a theory on the basis of secondary sources; primary sources should always be consulted and I am sorry to say that the professor has not done so.

The Advaita view of perception (both valid and illusory) is found in the 'Pratyakṣa Pariccheda' of *Vedānta Paribhāṣā*. There it is clearly stated that in valid perception the object is empirically real (*vyāvahārika satya*) and the object in illusory perception is apparently real (*prātibhāsika satya*). When a pot is perceived as pot, the pot is empirically real in the sense that it is perceived by all and not negated by any empirical knowledge. But when a snake is perceived in a rope, the snake is perceived only by the person under illusion and it is negated by the empirical knowledge of the locus 'rope'. As distinguished from empirical truth, the snake in the rope is said to be apparently real. The distinction between

empirical truth or object and apparent truth or object is made on the following points: (1) The empirical object is perceived by all under ordinary circumstances, the apparent object is perceived only by a person under illusion; (2) The empirical object is caused by *avidyā* or ignorance of the locus-consciousness, and the apparent object is due to the ignorance of its locus-empirical object and some adventitious defect (*āgantuka doṣa*, like a defect of sense organ which is technically known as *kācakāmalādi doṣa*).

So, according to Advaita Vedānta, no knowledge is possible without an object independent of knowledge. In the case of valid perception the object is empirical and in the case of illusion it is apparent. The apparent object, according to the Advaitins, is perceived through the modification of ignorance (*avidyā vṛtti*) and not through the modification of the intellect (*antaḥkāraṇa vṛtti*). In the illusory perception of the snake in the rope, the perception arises in the form of 'this is a snake'. 'This' part is known through the *antaḥkāraṇa vṛtti* and the 'snake' part through the *avidyā vṛtti*. An objection may be raised here. As there are two *vṛttis* in the case of illusory perception, two cases of knowledge should be admitted in illusory perception, like the Prābhākaras. In answer the Advaitins say, though *vṛttis* here are two, still, as these are reflected in the same consciousness, knowledge here is one and not two. What is necessary for Advaita perception (either valid or invalid) is an object independent of knowledge. In the case of valid perception the object is prior to knowledge and in the case of illusion the object arises at the same time (*samakālina*) as knowledge. When knowledge and illusory object arise at the same time there is no reason for admitting the dependence of the illusory object on knowledge.

Vijñānavādi Buddhists do not accept any object independent of knowledge (*jñānātirikta*) and hence the difference between Vijñānavāda and Advaita is very clear.¹

1. Saṃkara himself has refuted Vijñānavāda in his *Brahma Sūtra-bhāṣya*, 2.2.28-29.

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The author, Prof. Arvind Sharma, sees a contradiction in Advaitic epistemology and, as he himself admits, it is only a 'seeming' or 'apparent' contradiction. But the contradiction becomes 'clear' in the conclusion. What was 'seeming' in the statement of the problem becomes 'clear' in the conclusion of the author. What exactly is the nature of contradiction in Advaita epistemology? This is not made clear by the author, and Prof. Sharma simply remarks that the theory of perception according to Advaita is rather crude on the scientific side. It must, however, be borne in mind that what has got epistemological value in the empirical framework (*vyāvahārika*) loses its significance in the extra-empirical (*pāramārthika*) level. If this is borne in mind there cannot be any scope for contradiction in Advaita.

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The problem pointed by Arvind Sharma in the epistemology of Advaita Vedanta is mainly because of his Naiyāyika standpoint. There is virtually no contradiction, apparent or real, in the Advaita system as regards knowledge of the object and erroneous knowledge.

The statement of Dr. Sharma, in the first step of his note under reference, is correct. The external reality of objects is recognized in Advaita at the phenomenal level. But this level is relative and is sublated at a higher and subtler level. The world is conventionally real, as we take the currency note to be money, whereas we know that it is simply a piece of paper. The world has the signature of its Governor on it. But it is cancelled as an external object in the dream state, as is clearly stated by Gaudapāda in his *Māndūkya Kārikā*

(2.4). Śaṅkara, however, feels that waking experience is relatively more real than dream experience (cf. his commentary on the *Brahma Sūtras*, 2.2.29).

Sharma's statement under the same step, that for the Advaitins ideas and objects are not the same but are distinct, is also correct. In his commentary on the *Brahma Sūtras* Śaṅkara states this unambiguously: *tasmād-artha-jñānāyor-abhedah* (2.2.28). While criticizing the Yogācāra Buddhists, he states that their statement as to the appearance of internal forms 'as-if-external' (*bahirvad*) is incorrect. The object of knowledge is external. Knowledge is not a subjective activity (*mānasī kriyā na*); it is objectively regulated (*vastu-tantra*). Viṣṇumitra cannot be seen 'as if' he is the son of a barren woman.

The second and third steps of Dr. Sharma are obviously misconceived. The Advaitin's theory of error does not require the actual presence of the erroneous object during the act of error. Śaṅkara, in his *Adhyāsa-bhāṣya* on the *Brahma Sūtras*, clearly states that error (*bhrama, adhyāsa, viparyaya*) is taking something to be that which it is not (*atasmin tadbuddhiḥ*). Error takes place due to the superimposition of the properties of the inner organ (*antaḥkaraṇa*), namely, *kāma, saṁkalpa, vicikitsā*, and *adhyavasāya*. Therefore it is false and this is obvious to one and all (*sarva-loka-pratyakṣaḥ*). Such a wrong apprehension is the root cause of all evils, and to get rid of such evil (*asyānārtha-hetoḥ prahaṇāya*) the study of Vedanta is undertaken.

The *Vedānta Paribhāṣā* states that *cit-tva* (consciousness) is common to both valid and erroneous knowledge. There is no contact of the object as such in erroneous knowledge. Real silver is not the cause of the appearance of silver on the conch-shell. The fact of the appearance of silver here is completely different (*vilakṣaṇa*) from ordinary experience. When we see silver on the conch-shell, we have to admit the *anirvacanīya* appearance of silver (*anirvacanīya rajatotpattiḥ*) on the basis of the logic of the remainder (*pariśeṣa-nyāya*).

The factors for the production of conch-silver are extraordinary (*alaukika*). Due to the fusion of the three forms of consciousness, namely, *prāmāṇa*, *prameya* and *pramātr*, a state of ignorance prevails and the conch-shell appears to be silver in the form of an object¹.

The cause for the erroneous appearance of the conch-shell as silver, as per the Vi-varaṇa school, is *tūla-avidyā*. The *Nyāya Makaranda* calls it *anirvacanīyā'vidyā*. It is sublated by determinate (*savikalpaka*) perception, whereas the *mūla-avidyā* is annihilated by the knowledge of Brahman. In the act of error the impressions of the silver seen earlier are revoked and take the form of an erroneous perception. The act is associated, for the time being, with the defects of vision (*kācādi doṣa dūṣita locana*). The contact of an object with the defective sense-organ produces a *vṛtti* in the inner organ and the this-ness of the object is reflected as an erroneous object. It is explained through the logic of 'the water in the pond' (*tadāgodaka nyāya*).

Thus the fact of error is said to be *anirvacanīya* in Advaita. This term is rather a technical one in this system. It is explained as not determinable either as real or unreal (*sadasadbhyām-anirvacanīyam*). Śaṅkara, in his *Vivekacūdāmaṇi*, says in the context of *māyā* that it is neither real nor unreal nor both.² The erroneous object (ie silver or snake) is neither real nor unreal and hence placed under a third category of *anirvācya*. Had the silver been real, it would not have been sublated; had it been unreal (like a lotus-in-the-sky), it would not have appeared.³ Citsukha, in his *Nyāya Makaranda-ṭikā* says, in tune with Śaṅkara, that *anirvacanīya* means that which does not contain reality or unreality or both

reality and unreality. The *anirvacanīya* is not only distinct from the real as well as the unreal, but also distinct from the real and the unreal. It may be noted here that the sublated state does not admit the existence of silver even when one took the conch-shell to be silver. The negation is absolute.

The Advaitins are very clear about the fact that the content of illusory experience cannot really exist in the substratum of illusion. It is also not a memory-image. It is neither present elsewhere (like the Naiyāyikas), nor is it purely internal (as per the Yogācāras) or absolutely non-existent (like the Mādhyamikas). Error, like truth, points to an object apart from its cognition. The non-existent silver cannot be perceived, for the necessary conditions of its perception are absent. The false object, for the Advaitins, is that which appears in a locus where it is eternally negated (cf. *Citsukhīya*). To justify the appearance as well as the sublation of the illusory content, the existence of an *anirvācya* object is admitted in the locus of its presentation. The prior perception and later sublation of the shell-silver will not be justified unless we assume the existence of the *anirvācya* object. *Arthāpatti* proves the indeterminateness (*anirvacanīyatā*) of the shell-silver. The negation here is of the *prātibhāsika* silver appearing as the *vyāvaharika*.

K.C. Bhattacharya, one of the leading Advaita thinkers of modern India, in his paper 'Śaṅkara's Doctrine of Māyā'⁴ makes very important remarks which could be of great help in the context. He says that the world could not be known as an illusion unless we had the experience of illusion itself being given as such. The illusion itself, according to him, is presented in experience as illusion. He delineates three stages in the

1. *Tataśca pramātrcaitanyābhinnaviṣayacaitanyaniṣṭhā śuktitva prakārikā'vidyā cākacikyādisādrśyasandarśanasamudbodhitarajataśaṁskā rasadhrīcinā kācādidōṣasamavahitā rajatarūpārthākāreṇa rajatajñānābhāsākāreṇa ca pariṇamate.* —Dharmarāja Adhvarīndra, *Vedānta Paribhāṣā*.

2. Cf. verse 109.

3. *Sat cet na bādheta, asat cet na pratibhāseta.*

4. Cf. *Proceedings of the First Indian Philosophical Congress* (Calcutta: The Calcutta Philosophical Society, 1927), p. 44.

process of erroneous knowledge. First we apprehend an illusory thing, or rather that which will later be contemplated as illusory, as an objective fact. Then when the basis is seen, the basis is taken as objective and real and the thing experienced earlier assumes the aspect of unreality. When the rope is perceived as real, the snake is no longer accepted as such. It, however, is still regarded as presented but presented as 'no-fact'. The epistemological attitude in this, the second, stage of correction, is still objective. Though corrected, the snake is neither forgotten nor presented as a mere subjective fact. It persists as an objectively presented no-fact. At the third stage the unreal snake assumes the paramount role. It has been corrected, and now it is contemplated as corrected. More attention is paid to this consideration and the snake is found to be no possible object at all. It is considered not only as not existent now but also as not existent even when it was perceived or rather even when it appeared to be perceived. He, however, notes that that snake then, shorn of its reality in the second stage and now of its bare objectivity also, is still given to us as a positive (*bhāva-rūpa*), unthinkable (*anirvacanīya*) object. It cannot be rejected as absolute nought.

Thus, on the grounds noted above, the misapprehensions of Arvind Sharma, based mainly on secondary sources, are ruled out.

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Dr. Sharma appears to have mixed up different theories of veridical and illusory perception. In veridical perception of external objects, there are three empirically different factors—the knower (*pramātā*), the mode (*vr̥tti*) of the internal instrument (*antaḥkaraṇa*), and the external object (*viśaya*). Now although empirically they are different, really there is one underlying foundational con-

sciousness which is falsely restricted (*avacchinna*) by different entities. Thus the one foundational consciousness falsely restricted by the internal instrument (*antaḥkaraṇāvacchinna caitanya*) is the knower (*pramātā*); the same foundational consciousness falsely restricted by a mode of internal instrument (*antaḥkaraṇa-vr̥ttyavacchinna caitanya*) is the *pramāṇa*; and the foundational consciousness falsely restricted by the object (*viśayāvacchinna caitanya*) is the *prameya*. The process of veridical perception consists in the going out of the internal instrument (*antaḥkaraṇa*) through the sense-organs and reaching the object and taking its shape or form, which may be regarded as the image or idea (*vr̥tti*) of the object. The *vr̥tti*, however, does not come into being until the *antaḥkaraṇa* reaches the object (*viśaya*) and assumes its form. Now as the object is itself the foundational consciousness falsely restricted by the object, and as the *vr̥tti* is also the foundational consciousness falsely restricted by it, in perceiving the object, the *vr̥tti* occupies the same space and time as the object, the two false restrictions—the object and the *vr̥tti*—become non-different. So the foundational consciousness underlying the object and that underlying the *vr̥tti* coalesce, and become identical, as the two false restrictions become non-different, even empirically. This explains how it is the object itself that is perceived by the knower by means of the *antaḥkaraṇa-vr̥tti*.

It is true that the external object has to exist as unknown before being perceived; otherwise the sense-organ cannot go out and reach it in order to assume its shape or form. This, also, means that the nescience (*ajñāna*) covering the external object is destroyed (*āvaraṇa bhanga*), by the *pramāṇa*. In illusory perception, however, the process is entirely different. According to Advaita Vedānta there are two different types of internal states—one type is *pramāṇa-vr̥tti*, which is *antaḥkaraṇa-vr̥tti*; the other type is *avidyā-vr̥tti*, ie, the mode of nescience which the knower possesses. This *avidyā-vr̥tti* is very different in

nature from *antaḥkāraṇa-vṛtti* which is a *pramāṇa*. The mode of nescience (*avidyā-vṛtti*) does not reveal or manifest an already existing unknown object which is resolved by a *pramāṇa*. This *avidyā-vṛtti* has two functions—covering the real object and projecting an empirically unreal object. This object does not have to exist before being known, since *avidyā-vṛtti* does not require the pre-existence of the object for it does not have to assume the shape or form of the object. As a matter of fact, it projects it out there, and covers the empirically real object, say, a piece of rope. The illusory object exists so long as the illusion (*avidyā-vṛtti*) exists.

Thus if the functional distinction between *antaḥkāraṇa-vṛtti* which is a *pramāṇa* and *avidyā-vṛtti* is made, then no problem in the epistemology of Advaita Vedānta arises.

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Dr. Arvind Sharma detects a contradiction in Advaita epistemology. The question is whether it is only apparent or there is a genuine defect, fatal to the theory.

The apparent contradiction can be very simply put: the Advaita theory of perception requires the existence of the object perceived previous to the appearance of knowledge. A misperception is phenomenologically a case of perception though it does not yield valid knowledge. But the object perceived in a misperception lasts only for the duration of knowledge and thus not previous to the appearance of knowledge. How then can it be a case of perception, although a mistaken one? (We should bear in mind the Advaita view that even in the case of erroneous perception the object misperceived is distinct from its knowledge though they exist for the same period of time.)

Comment: Since Sharma has been very precise and pointed in his presentation of the

apparent contradiction, I shall also be as concise as possible in its resolution, leaving it, as he does, to the wisdom of the readers to elaborate and mull over what I say.

Mistaking a piece of rope for a snake is not a *misperception* in the Western sense of the term. Like perception (*pratyakṣa-pramāṇa* of Advaita), such an illusion is an immediate or direct form of knowledge, but not every immediate knowledge is perception. What Sharma calls misperception is not generated by *pramāṇa* and no *vṛtti* of *antaḥkāraṇa* is involved here. What is involved is a *vṛtti* of *avidyā* which is said to be involved not only in error but also in memory and unsure awareness (*saṁśaya*). Whatever cannot exist unknown, such as pain or pleasure, must be known through a *vṛtti* of *avidyā*. The *avidyā-vṛtti* involved in so-called misperception is of the nature of *tūlājñāna*.

Consciousness reflected by *avidyā-vṛtti* is called *sākṣi-caitanya*. That which cannot exist unknown—such as the *antaḥkāraṇa* and its modes, pain, pleasure and *vṛttijñāna*, *avidyā* itself and its modes and the objects of illusory immediate knowledge—are not established by *pramāṇa* but are objects of *sākṣi-caitanya* (witness-consciousness). Advaita Vedānta believes in three means for establishing things. Things like pots and pans are established by *pramāṇa*. They can exist unknown. (Śaṅkara is an epistemological realist unlike the Buddhist Vijñānavādins, as Sharma correctly asserts). *Antaḥkāraṇa* and its *vṛttis* play a vital role in their knowledge which is generated by *pramāṇa*. The second kind of things are the illusory objects and their source, *avidyā* itself. These are known through *sākṣi-caitanya* itself, which is self-established (*svataḥ-siddha*).

The contradiction detected by Sharma vanishes if we pay sufficient attention to the Advaita notions of *avidyā-vṛtti* and *sākṣi-caitanya*.

India's Prayer

RABINDRANATH TAGORE

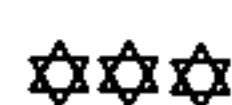
Every lover of India must repeat this wonderful prayer, composed by one of her greatest poets.

I

Thou hast given us to live.
Let us uphold this honour with all our strength and will;
For Thy glory rests upon the glory that we are.
Therefore in Thy name we oppose the power that would plant its banner upon our soul.
Let us know that Thy light grows dim in the heart that bears its insult of bondage,
That the life, when it becomes feeble, timidly yields Thy throne to untruth,
For weakness is the traitor who betrays our soul.
Let this be our prayer to Thee—
Give us power to resist pleasure where it enslaves us,
Make us strong that our worship may flower in love, and bear fruit in work.
Make us strong that we may not insult the weak and the fallen,
That we may hold our love high where all things around us are wooing the dust.
They fight and kill for self-love, giving it Thy name,
They fight for hunger that thrives on brothers' flesh,
They fight against Thine anger and die.
But let us stand firm and suffer with strength
 for the True, for the Good, for the Eternal in man,
 for Thy Kingdom which is in the union of hearts,
 for the Freedom which is of the Soul.

II

Our voyage is begun, Captain, we bow to Thee!
The storm howls and the waves are wicked and wild, but we sail on.
The menace of danger waits in the way to yield to Thee its offerings of pain,
 and a voice in the heart of the tempest cries: 'Come to conquer fear!'
Let us not linger to look back for the laggards, or benumb the quickening hours with
dread and doubt.
For Thy time is our time and Thy burden is our own,
 and life and death are but Thy breath playing upon the eternal sea of Life.
Let us not wear our hearts away picking small help and taking slow count of friends,
Let us know more than all else that Thou art with us and we are Thine for ever.



RELIGION AND LIFE



Swami Bhuteshanandaji's Answers to Questions

Maharaj, I feel that my time is passing by fruitlessly....

Oh, yes! Such a thought is good. But are you feeling restless because of its passing by uselessly? The guru pressed his disciple's head under water for sometime. After releasing him, he asked, 'How was it, down there?' The disciple replied, 'My goodness! I nearly lost my life! I was panting for breath!' When your mind is restless in such a manner for God, then only you will be successful. And these are Sri Ramakrishna's words: 'O Niranjan, O Niranjan! Don't you see life is short and passing by? When will you realize God?'

Cannot God set this world right even without incarnating here?

If God wishes to have some fun, why do you object to it, my dear? The thing is, God does not incarnate for His own benefit; it is for your benefit that He condescends. What He will or will not do is only known to Him.

Is it true that those who possess the six virtues (aiśvaryas) are called avatars?

The avatars possess divine qualities in abundance. *Īśvara* has been defined to be endowed with six virtues—governing power, bravery, glory, grace, knowledge, and renunciation. These are the six virtues present in Him.

*Aiśvaryasya samagrasya
dharmasya yaśasaḥ śriyaḥ;
Vairāgyaścātha mokṣasya
saṅṇām bhaga itiṅganā.*

[—*Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, 6.5.74]

That is, of the divine glories, virtue, fame, beauty or majesty, detachment, and liberation in full—these six are called *bhaga*.

There is one more śloka of this type:

*Utpattiṁ pralayaṁ caiva
bhūtānām-āgatiṁ gatiṁ;
Vetti vidyām-avidyāñca
sa vācya bhagavāniti.*

[—*Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, 6.5.78]

This verse is often quoted in the *Gītā* commentaries. It means that He is to be called *bhagavān* who knows the origin and destruction, gain and loss, enlightenment and ignorance of creatures.

Haven't you read in the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* these words of Sri Ramakrishna: 'He who is beyond the three gunas is the Bhagavan with His six supernatural powers?' [cf. p. 104]

Maharaj, doesn't God come to the aid of those who do not perform religious acts?

The question would have been relevant if God resided in some far off place; but He is present within every being. He is as much present in wicked persons as in good persons. But He is more manifest in holy men, and that is why they are pure, and sing His glories constantly.

Demons (asuras) used to meet their end at the hands of God only. Was not that a great good fortune for them?

It is said in the Puranas that *asuras* were devotees who used to worship God with the attitude of enmity (*vaira bhāva*). They were aware that their salvation would come through sadhana performed with the attitude of enmity. One of Ramprasad's songs is about a battle with the Divine Mother—of his fighting a great battle with Her:

'This bitterly contested suit between the

Mother and Her son—
 What sport it is says Ramprasad.
 I shall not cease tormenting Thee
 Till Thou Thyself shalt yield the fight
 And take me in Thine arms at last.'

A Puranic story about this is famous: Two sentries were guarding the gate of Vaikuntha. A sage, about to enter through the gate, was stopped by them. The sage became very angry and cursed them, saying, 'You will no longer be allowed to stay in Vaikuntha.' However, after a lot of prayer and petition, the sage became pacified and said that they would be able to return to Vaikuntha if they could repeat the name of the Lord continuously. When they enquired how long it would take for them to return, the sage replied: 'If you worship Him as His devotees, it will require seven lives, whereas if you perform sadhana with the attitude of enmity, three lives will suffice.'

Hiranyakasipu thought of God all the time—he worshipped Him with the attitude of enmity and used to think that he would teach God a lesson, once he found Him. He asked his son, Prahlada, who was a devotee of Vishnu, 'Where is your Hari?' The boy replied, 'God is everywhere.' Hiranyakasipu pointed towards a pillar in his palace to ask if God was in it. 'Of course, He is present in that pillar too,' said the boy. Hiranyakasipu was very strong physically; he broke the pillar down. Out came the Lord from the pillar in the guise of Nrisimha (a lion-headed man) and killed the demon, whose sins had multiplied beyond all limits. The death of Hiranyakasipu signifies salvation.

Maharaj, what is the relation between constant remembrance (smarana and manana) and japa?

Japa is performing *smarana* and *manana* with greater concentration. The designation or name (*nāma*) and the designated or named (*nāmī*) should be felt as identical. While repeating His name, you must think that you are in His presence. Performing japa with

great intensity and concentration results in such a state of mind.

Does performing japa enhance concentration and will-power?

When a scientist concentrates his mind on his research, is he doing japa? There is strong power when worldly desires are intense. Do you perform japa to attain God, or to enhance your will-power? Can you find any trace of will left in a person who totally surrenders to God?

Maharaj, is that not the last stage?

Why should it be the last stage? What then is the beginning? Total surrender of the will is imperative for God-realization. This is the way for beginners to reach the goal. How absurd it is to think that God can be realized by means of the will! Will may help if one desires to earn money, perhaps.

Can will-power be increased through japa?

Again the same question! It may or may not increase. What I mean is, it is possible to achieve whatever you aspire for through your japa only if the aspiration is intense and forceful. There are quite a few who practise japa only to harm others....

Maharaj, I have a question: Can one attain siddhis or miraculous powers through japa?

We understand *siddhi* to mean God-realization, and japa is an important means to achieve that. As we progress in spiritual life our ideas about the world and its experiences constantly undergo change—misconceptions are cleared. The devotee resorts to japa not to become rich or a scholar but to attain God. Happiness and sorrow are fleeting, and they will not affect a true devotee. He does not want any miraculous powers—he wants God.

—Compiled by Smt. Manju Nandi Mazumdar

Let Us Become Immortal

FR. ANTHONY ELENJIMITTAM

Here is a fervent appeal from an octogenarian spiritual aspirant for everyone to strive to attain Self-knowledge so as to realize the oneness of existence and become immortal.

Nobody wants to die. Yet, all living beings are destined to die. Let alone living creatures, even planets, stars, solar systems and galaxies will have an end. Everything that begins must end; all that is born is destined to perish. None can flout these inexorable laws of nature. Laws governing the universe are inviolable.

The idea of death terrifies us. We feel lost. We desperately try to save ourselves, but the end comes all the same. Yudhishtira was asked by the God of Death as to what the greatest wonder in the world was. Dharmaraja replied that in spite of seeing our kith and kin and people around dying, we imagine that we shall not die, and that is the greatest surprise. Down the ages, people have been trying several means to become immortal, to defy death, to stretch the span of life as much as possible. Yet, the result has been a big zero. Why? For the simple reason that we are going the wrong way. But the truth is different altogether. *We are not dying at all.*

We are not mere bodies. We are something different. Birth is not the beginning nor is death the end. In the long, long evolutionary process, we put on bodies in order to ascend the ladder of spiritual perfection, or according to the karmic impressions descend to lower forms of life. The struggle for perfection goes on till we have reached the supreme state. We keep on coming and going until we attain spiritual perfection. Why do we seek perfection? We seek perfection because we are Perfection itself; we are something in relation to the supreme Reality.

We think we are mortal and struggle to be immortal. Yet, the truth is that we are not

mortal. The Upanishads, Buddhism, Zen, and Taoism insist emphatically that all creatures, including human beings, are intrinsically and ontologically immortal. Though to our senses and mind all creatures appear to be mortal, the reality is something different. The Upanishads proclaim human beings as 'Children of Immortality' (*amṛtasya putrāḥ*). Are such statements mere fiction? Of course not. A galaxy of sages and saints have had firsthand experience of the truth of the immortality of the soul, and their findings have reached us in the form of a few Upanishads which have survived the ravages of time. These great sages have not only told about their personal experiences but have also said that all of us can be immortal and shown us the way. We should be grateful to God for bestowing on us eyes to see, mind to understand, and patience to follow the disciplines necessary for understanding the profound meaning of the holy scriptures. By reading them, meditating on them, and practising the truths in our own lives through consistent effort, we can effect a metamorphosis of ourselves from born mammals to divinities in this very life itself.

Some worthless carbon is buried underground. Owing to the heat underneath and the various chemical phenomena that take place, it becomes a precious diamond in time. A caterpillar drags itself on plants and trees, and feeds on leaves. While enclosed within its cocoon it undergoes a sort of extinction, but what comes out is a beautiful butterfly. This is illustrative of the second birth which we all have to undergo in order to reach the shores of immortality. Cannot we, human beings of infinite potentialities, achieve some-

thing in this life then?

Immortality and beatitude form the innermost core of our being. How come? This can be understood when we know what we really are. Behind the senses is the mind, behind the mind functions the reasoning intellect, and behind the intellect is the ego. The primordial matter (*mūla prakṛti*) is the source of all this. This is the process of creation according to the Sāṃkhya philosophy of Kapila. What is behind the primordial *prakṛti*? It is the *Puruṣa*, the eternal witness. We have falsely identified ourselves with the senses, the mind, and so on while actually we are the *Puruṣa*. Behind the five senses is the mind which, left uncontrolled, allies itself with the sense-impressions and drags us towards the illusions of this relative, apparant universe. The external world's pleasure and pain is attracting and repelling us. This oscillation between attraction and repulsion continues until we become enlightened. What we ordinarily fear is only physical death, the death which will deprive us of enjoying the world. In fact, we should be sorry that we are presently dead to the sane voice that calls us from within—to enjoy eternal and lasting bliss. We shall have to listen to that call one day or other. We shall have to stop following our sense-organs and mind. How are we to do that? The scriptures come to our aid. With the practice of Patanjali's Yoga or Vedantic disciplines like discrimination between the permanent and the evanescent (*nityānitya-vastuviveka*), refusing to enjoy the fruits of action in this life and the next (*ihāmutra phalabhoga virāga*), practising the sixfold virtues of mental calm (*śama*), sense-control (*dama*), withdrawal of the mind from sense objects (*uparati*), forbearance (*titikṣā*), intelligent faith (*śraddhā*), and mental concentration (*samādhāna*) we can reach the goal. The methods are readily available; all that is needed is sincere practice. Those of us who do not feel inclined to such yogic practices and meditation may pray and follow the path of devotion. Sri Sankara has, in his *Vivekacūdāmaṇi*, laid down

conditions for intense yearning for Self-realization, which is *mumukṣutvam*. This state of mind bestows energy, enthusiasm and an undaunted will-power to give up everything that obstructs the path to Self-realization. What happens when we struggle for the Divine? Even as the river Ganga gives up its limitations and enters the ocean, we give up our limitations and become one with the shoreless ocean of supreme Being. In other words, we become immortal.

In our best, inspired moments, we understand and fully realize that our ego, which identifies itself with name and form, is an illusion. However, we do not hold on to this for long. The real 'I' within us is the spectator of the lower ego and its movements, the observer of all our mental activities. We have to turn towards that real 'I' instead of going outwards. If we can ally ourselves with this divine oracle within us, this true 'I' within, and be guided by that supernal Light of lights, the Logos—'Enlightening every man coming into this world', as St. John phrases it—then, meandering through desert sands and oases, through rain and shine, we can finally reach our true home. That home is eternal, the One without a second (*ekamevādvitīyam*). This reaching our true state is called realization. Once we reach this, we go beyond all fear and doubt.

When I had the privilege to work with Mahatma Gandhi in Noakhali in November-December 1946, Mahatmaji told me: 'Anthony, politics will delude you, while Vedanta will enlighten you. Your mission is on the side of Buddhas and Christs, of Krishnas and Ramas. Go along that path and your service will benefit the human family.' Socrates said: 'I am neither a Greek nor an Athenian, but a citizen of the mother earth.' We also proclaim aloud: 'I am neither an Indian nor a Christian nor a Hindu, but a speck of consciousness, which, when united with the universal Consciousness becomes Consciousness itself.' We shall then be returning home

(continued on page 736)

The Image of Sri Ramakrishna: Its Significance

SWAMI SATPRAKASHANANDA

This was a paper read by Swami Satprakashanandaji at the ceremony of unveiling the alabaster bust of Sri Ramakrishna at the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Centre of New York on 10 January 1952.

Of the world's religious teachers of the highest order Sri Ramakrishna is the first to be photographed. Today humanity has among its cherished treasures three different photographic portraits of the Divine Master, who is venerated by many as an incarnation of God and by many more as a rare type of illumined soul. In carving the image of Sri Ramakrishna our distinguished artist, Malvina Hoffman, had the unique advantage of making his likeness true to life, inasmuch as she had not to depend solely on her imagination, past records, and hearsay, but was able to use photographs of the Master as her model.

None of his three photographs, however, portray Sri Ramakrishna on the plane of normal life, because each time he faced the camera he was absorbed in transcendental experience of mystical awareness, called in Sanskrit *samādhi*, while his countenance, radiant with superb joy, testified to the sublimity of his inner consciousness. Looking at one of his pictures Sri Ramakrishna once remarked, 'It is a picture of a very exalted state of yoga. Time will come when this will be worshipped in many a home.' Indeed, Sri Ramakrishna's portrait bears the impress of the state of God-consciousness and is therefore its veritable symbol. It is not possible to render in more realistic terms an expression of that ecstasy of Self-realization which thought cannot attain nor speech disclose. The meditative poses of deities and of spiritual leaders such as Sri Krishna, Buddha, Sankara, and others, delineated by Indian iconography are coloured more or less by the conceptions of the artists.

Sri Ramakrishna's whole personality was so suffused with divine love, purity, wisdom, and bliss that even in his lifetime he was recognized as the supreme Spirit incarnate in human form. His image is a genuine representation of the Divinity. I firmly believe that the sacred icon which is unveiled today will contribute immensely in removing the veil of ignorance from the hearts of men and women and in revealing unto them the spiritual Reality it typifies.

Man feels the necessity of apprehending abstract ideas in concrete forms. It is the concrete expression that makes the abstract more vivid and real to him. So he has a tendency to represent the supersensible in terms of the sensible. He also finds satisfaction in giving orderly expression to his conceptions, thoughts, and sentiments. Both these urges have been the creative forces of fine art. It is the function of art to give concrete shape to the inner ideas and ideals. All genuine works of art are symbolic. As man learns mostly through eyes and ears, he needs two distinct kinds of symbol: visible and audible. So art has two main forms of symbolic expression: architecture, sculpture, painting on the one hand, and music and poetry on the other.

Religion deals primarily with the supersensible truths. So in the religious life of man there has been the imperative need of symbols, both visible and audible. In every religion there are symbolic presentations of spiritual truths. In its efforts to comprehend the supreme Reality, to worship God with devotion and joy, to feel His presence vividly and intimately, the religious spirit of man has

manifested itself in all kinds of art. But not all the fine arts have been prevalent in every religion. For instance, in Mohammedanism iconography and music seem to have no place. In Christianity dancing has not grown as an expression of religious sentiment. In Hinduism, however, all the avenues of art have been sought in approaching God. In the development of art, religion has played a distinctive role. Perhaps all the fine arts have their origin in religion.

Of the two main branches of iconography—sculpture and painting—the former has been prominent in Hinduism and Buddhism and the latter in Christianity. Both have deeply influenced the religious lives of the people. Among the religious symbols the likenesses of God-men are particularly impressive and inspiring. The great spiritual leaders who are worshipped as divine incarnations, messengers, or prophets are the highest manifestations of God in human form. They make God real to us. We may conceive of God by speculative reason or by the study of books, yet we cannot be free from doubts as to His real existence until we know the God-like personages. We can understand divine purity, divine love, divine power, divine wisdom, divine joy only through them. They represent God to us more than any celestial being. We cannot help adoring God through them. Their images serve as natural symbols in the worship of the Divinity. They are most helpful to spiritual aspirants especially at the early stage of development.

These God-men are the very embodiments of moral and spiritual principles. Their images signify the highest ideals. Worshipping God through such images is not idolatry. The great spiritual leaders are the best exemplars of their own teachings. Their lives demonstrate the truths they preach. The key to their message is in their own lives. We can comprehend the abstract principles only in relation to these persons. Their human forms are the emblems of divine truths.

It is the God-like personalities that im-

plant on our minds the highest principles and truths as the very ideals of life. We may receive sublime ideas from various sources and ponder on them seriously, yet they will have no hold on us as ideals until we find them actualized in the lives of the great. It is our love and admiration for the great ones that sustain our moral and spiritual strength in the various trials and tribulations of life. A person may be interested in religion, may study religious books, may speculate on God as assiduously as any research student of religion; he may even observe certain rites and forms; yet he may be lacking in the essentials of spiritual life. In order to be spiritual he must first be convinced of the reality of God; secondly, he should understand that the realization of God is the supreme ideal of life; thirdly, he should find and follow the appropriate method of God-realization; and above all, he should have yearning for God. For all these requisites of spiritual life, particularly for the longing for God, which is the rarest of all, the aspirant needs inspiration from the great souls. Only the lovers of God can inspire us with the love of God.

The life of Sri Ramakrishna provides us with the most striking illustrations of these principles. He was born in an age when scepticism was the order of the day, when atheism and agnosticism were running rampant. He was immune to the spirit of the time. From his early age he missed God and God alone. His whole being was crying for the direct experience of God. He turned his back completely upon the sensible world and plunged into the struggle for God-realization. He practised one after another not only the multifarious course of Hinduism, but also the methods of Mohammedanism and Christianity. He realized God through each of them.

Experience of God differs according to the nature of the spiritual discipline. Sri Ramakrishna's realization covers the entire range of spiritual experiences vouchsafed to man. He had the transcendental experience of the impersonal absolute Brahman; he was

aware of God's presence in the universe as the all-pervasive supreme Principle; he saw God dwelling in the hearts of all as their innermost Self; he also attained his complete unity with the Divinity through every relationship of love. He was so well established in the realm of the Spirit that his mind went up and down the whole gamut of superconscious experience with perfect ease. Indeed Sri Ramakrishna's life is a complete demonstration of the fact of God-realization. Here he stands supreme. The world has been sorely in need of such an evidence.

From direct experience he declared:

God is real. He has many aspects and forms. He can be realized. The ways of realization differ according to the capacities and tendencies of the individuals. The different religions of the world are so many pathways to God-realization. The realization of God is the supreme ideal of life.

He also recommended the service of God in man as the universal spiritual discipline.

The reality of God, the realization of God, the harmony of religions, and the service of God in man are the four cardinal points of his message. It centres on the teaching that the supreme object of human life is the realization of God. Man should live with this end

in view. Nothing else can be an end in itself. It is the goal not only of his religious but also of his worldly activities. All the life values, material, intellectual, aesthetic, and moral must subserve the spiritual ideal. The social, political and economic systems should be built so as to facilitate the spiritual growth of man. Thus there will be harmony in all the aspects and activities of life.

The ultimate goal is one but the ways are many according to the individual's psycho-physical conditions. All men and women, at whatever levels of life they may be, can reach the goal through progressive courses. Even from the bottom of the lowest pit a man can direct his steps towards the mountain-top.

Let one and all live in this world as pilgrims to the shrine of Truth. This is the secret of world unity, peace and progress. The supreme ideal is indispensable to both the spiritual and material growth of man. Whenever worldly greatness and glory become the primary objectives of life, man's morals and intellect degenerate being subordinate to them. How can there be peace and progress in such a case?

So Sri Ramakrishna's message is the key to man's spiritual and material development individually and collectively. His image is the emblem of his message. □

Inspiration Never Dies

(continued from page 715)

soned upon them and then experimented to test whether his conclusions were true. The same is true of Raman in the domain of physics.

The sooner we bring the scientific spirit of observation, reason and experiment into *all* aspects of life, the better for us, the better for the world. □

Homage to Huxley

SUSAN WALTERS

Aldous Huxley was born on 24 July 1894. We bring you a touching homage to this great man here. This paper was read at the UGC Seminar on Huxley held on 22-23 January 1999 at Osmania University, Hyderabad.

‘Whosoever being there is endowed with glory and grace and vigour, know that to have sprung from a fragment of My splendour.’ (*Bhagavadgītā*, 10.41.)

In his commentary to this verse, S. Radhakrishnan says, ‘...every work of genius is a revelation of the Divine.’

After reading the life and works of Aldous Huxley, we cannot help feeling that he belongs in the category of those few human beings who were ‘endowed with glory and grace and vigour.’ His whole life seems to have been a ‘graceful and vigorous search’ for Truth, for the Absolute. He has described in fascinating ways the many people, incidents, and psychological and philosophical discoveries he has come across, or conceived of, in his journey to that goal. These all make up a large body of literature—stories, novels, poems, philosophical treatises, and political essays. Some of them are combined. For example, his novels and political writings often have a philosophical background.

His thoughts are original and sometimes challenge us to stop fooling ourselves about our selves. He was very much aware of how our hidden ego throws a screen of righteousness across our sometimes base impulses.

In this paper I will confine myself to a personal assessment of what his writings, especially his philosophical writings, have meant to one Western person—me. And thus how he has brought me, and other Westerners like me, to a deep understanding and appreciation of Indian thought and culture.

Some time between my 30th and 35th birthday, I looked around and found myself

where I had thought I wanted to be—in a nice house, a reasonably happy married mother of four children. I wasn’t living in exactly the place I would have chosen—a small (2000 population) midwest American town, not far from my birthplace. But my family life was more or less satisfactory and I did not complain—at first.

Then I started to wonder: ‘What is the purpose of all this? To have a little happiness, a little misery, and then fall into the grave?’ The children? But they will grow up and face the same problem—the purposelessness of life. I tried to take a part in the religion which prevailed and in which I had been nurtured, Protestant Christianity. But its emphasis on the acceptance of a compulsory dogma and its doctrine of one’s ultimate destination being a permanent heaven or a permanent hell, plus its claim to be the only path to one of those destinations (neither of which was very appealing to me) prevented me from becoming a very satisfied church member. The only other organized religion in the area was the Roman Catholic Church, and it had the same drawbacks as Protestantism. Roughly the same dogma, the same heaven-or-hell, and even more than Protestantism—the same claim to be the one true religion.

In my more and more desperate search for meaning, I made use of my perennial habit, reading. And this is how Aldous Huxley arrived on my interior scene. I was a frequenter of our public library, and there I casually picked up *After Many a Summer Dies the Swan*. This book featured a low-keyed mystic. And that aroused my interest. I hadn’t pre-

viously been aware that there were such people. Soon after that, I heard of Huxley's *Perennial Philosophy*, which I ordered from its publisher. I remember the day the book arrived in the mail, and how I hungrily devoured it.

The Perennial Philosophy was first published in 1944 by Harper and Brothers, New York and London. It soon went through four more editions, indicating its popularity. (There must have been other unhappy seekers of meaning in the West besides me.)

What was it that first enthralled me? That can be answered by the very first sentence in the book, as found in the Introduction:

Philosophia Perennis—the phrase was coined by Leibniz; but the thing—the metaphysic that recognizes a divine Reality substantial to the world of things and lives and minds; the psychology that finds in the soul something similar to, or even identical with, divine Reality; the ethic that places man's final end in the knowledge of the immanent and transcendent Ground of all being—the thing is universal.

The sentence following this was also very important to me:

Rudiments of the Perennial Philosophy may be found among the traditionary lore of primitive peoples in every region of the world, and in its fully developed forms it has a place in every one of the higher religions.¹

In these two sentences I found just what I wanted, needed, was thirsting for—a reason for living and a valid explanation of the truths in the religion I had been born into and which I had tried to follow. The book itself is a commentary on these two basic truths—(1) the essential divinity of man, and (2) the presence of this truth in all the religions of the world. Later I discovered that these are basic principles of Indian thought and culture.

Actually, Huxley, in this and other books, has brought the best of Indian thought and culture to the West. His writings have also revived in India an appreciation and understanding of its own priceless religious and cultural heritage.

The Perennial Philosophy has 27 chapters in all and covers a wide range of quotations and comments on that subject. Here we will discuss only four chapters. Writing about all 27 would produce a book-size paper.

Chapter 1, 'That Art Thou'

The first chapter is titled 'That Art Thou'. Those very words make up one of the four *mahavakyas*, the Great Sayings of the Upanishads. Here Huxley gives us quotations from mystics across time and space who have arrived at the Truth—the truth that lies in the deepest part of our soul, and tells us who we really are.

He first quotes passages on this subject from two Western mystics, Meister Eckhart and William Law. This is followed by a longer passage from the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* which tells of a young boy proudly returning home from his long schooling with a pandit. His father, aware of his son's rather haughty manner, asks the boy to cut open a small seed from a fruit of a *nyagrodha* tree. Then he asks:

'What do you see there?' 'Nothing at all.' The father said, 'My son, that subtle essence which you do not perceive there—in that very essence stands the being of the huge *nyagrodha* tree. In that which is the subtle essence all that exists has its self. That is the True, that is the Self, and thou, Svetaketu, art That.'²

Quotations on this subject from many mystics and scriptures the world over make up the rest of this lengthy, important chapter: the Greek philosopher, Plotinus; the great Indian, Sankara; the Taoist sage, Chung Tzu; two Zen Buddhist scriptures, the *Lañkāvatāra Sūtra* and the *Yung-chia Ta-shih*; the Muslim-

1. Aldous Huxley, *The Perennial Philosophy* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1945), p. vii.

2. Ibid., pp. 3, 4.

Hindu, Kabir; two Jewish teachers, Philo and Rabbi Hillel; two Sufis, Bayazid of Bistun and Jalal-uddin; Sen T'sen; and Christian mystics and saints, St. Catherine of Genoa, St. Bernard, Hans Denk, Ruysbroeck, George Fox, and the unknown author of the *Theologia Germanica*.

I conclude these comments on this first chapter with a quotation from the *Theologia Germanica*:

Goodness needeth not to enter into the soul, for it is there already, only it is unperceived.³

Chapter 4, 'God in the World'

In this chapter Huxley compares the two ways of God-realization—seeing Him within, 'Thou art That,'⁴ and seeing Him in the world, 'All this is verily Brahman.'⁵ He says it is best if we see God both within and without. But he warns us that we must first purify ourselves inwardly before we can see God outwardly—before we can see God in everything. 'Samsara and Nirvana, perpetual perishing (the outer world) and eternity (inner world) are really and experientially one only to persons who have fulfilled certain conditions...only when you have learnt the infinitely difficult art of loving God with all your mind and heart and your neighbour as yourself.'⁶

The idea is to purify your heart ridding it of all self-centred egotism. Then you can see your own self rightly, and everything in the world shines with God's glory. Huxley illustrates this by describing the 'Oxherding Pictures', popular with Zen Buddhists. Here unregenerate man is first pictured as a wild ox. Then through picture after picture he is gradually transformed from black to white—eventually disappearing altogether; he has arrived at Nirvana. But this is not the

end. In the last picture, the ox is pictures coming back to the world, completely regenerated, being ridden by his master, the herdsman. He now loves and also teaches others how to love.

The 17th century English poet, Thomas Traherne, tells us what that perfection is like—what it is like seeing 'God in the World': ...every morning you awake in Heaven; see yourself in your Father's palace; and look upon the skies, the earth, and air as celestial joys; ...you love men so as to desire their happiness with a thirst equal to the zeal for your own; you delight in God for being good to all.⁷

Chapter 7, 'Truth'

Huxley begins this chapter with Meister Eckhart, the great 14th century German monk who said, 'Why dost thou prate of God? Whatever thou sayest of Him is untrue.'⁸ Eckhart is saying that God is beyond thought and speech. Our speculations about Him keep us from being aware of the truth that in reality, in essence, we are united with Him.

The Buddhist scripture, the *Sūtrālaṅkāra*, is in agreement with this. It says, 'The Truth indeed has never been preached by the Buddha, seeing that one has to realize it within oneself.'⁹

Throughout this chapter Huxley emphasizes that we must go beyond opinion, beyond argument, beyond reason, if we would realize the absolute, infinite Truth. And he finds quotations from a wide variety of saints and mystics to support his view.

I conclude this section with a quotation from the Sufi mystic, Jalal-uddin Rumi:

Reason is like an officer when the king appears; The officer then loses his power and hides himself. Reason is the shadow cast by God; God is the sun.¹⁰

3. Ibid., p. 14.

4. *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, 6.8.7, *passim*.

5. Ibid., 3.14.1.

6. *The Perennial Philosophy*, p. 70.

7. Ibid., p. 67.

8. Ibid., p. 125.

9. Ibid., p. 127.

10. Ibid., p. 141.

Chapter 12, 'Time and Eternity'

Meister Eckhart whom we quoted in the previous section was obviously a favourite of Aldous Huxley. In *The Perennial Philosophy* he is quoted 34 times; in this chapter Huxley has two quotations from him, in one of which Eckhart speaks of 'time':

Time is what keeps the light from reaching us. There is no greater obstacle to God than time, but temporalities, not only temporal affections, but the very taint and smell of time.¹¹

Huxley goes to the *Bhagavadgītā* for a description of time and eternity. In the 11th chapter of the *Gītā* Arjuna is given a vision of God in his form of God of the World, and he reacts with amazement and fear. Quoting the *Gītā*, Huxley says that Arjuna cries out,

'Tell me who you are.' The answer is clear and unequivocal.

'I come as Time, the waster of the peoples, ready for the hour that ripens to their ruin.'

But the God who comes so terribly as Time also exists timelessly as the God-head, as Brahman, whose essence is *Sat, Chit, Ananda*, Being, Awareness, Bliss; and within and beyond man's time-tortured psyche is his spirit, 'uncreated and uncreatable,' as Eckhart says, the Atman which is akin to or even identical with Brahman. The *Gita*...justifies God's ways to man by affirming...that man can die to his separate temporal selfness and so come to union with timeless Spirit.¹²

Huxley says further:

The peace that passes all understanding is the fruit of liberation into eternity; but in its ordinary everyday form peace is also the root of liberation.... That is one of the reasons why the policy correlated with eternity-philosophies is tolerant and non-violent. The other reason is that the eternity, whose realization is the ultimate

goal, is a kingdom of heaven within.... Every violence is, over and above everything else, a sacrilegious rebellion against the divine order.¹³

In a discussion of various religions and sects, Huxley praises the Quakers who, he says:

are the least obsessed with history.... Because Quaker theology was a form of eternity-philosophy, Quaker political theory rejected war and persecution as means to ideal ends, denounced slavery and proclaimed racial equality.¹⁴

In the final paragraph of this chapter, Huxley takes out after the provincialism of Western scholars who, with few exceptions, even today do not know, and do not care to know, about Sanskrit, Pali, or Chinese—Oriental thought in general. He says:

...most European and American authors of books about religion and metaphysics write as though nobody had ever thought about these subjects except the Jews, Greeks, and the Christians of the Mediterranean basin and western Europe. This is...an entirely voluntary and deliberate ignorance...it is also socially dangerous.... Like any other form of imperialism, theological imperialism is a menace to permanent world peace.¹⁵

Huxley would like us to understand and appreciate the value of an 'eternity philosophy' which, while not ignoring 'time', recognizes the supremacy of eternity.

Conclusion

Aldous Huxley concludes *The Perennial Philosophy* with a quotation from the philosopher of Sufism, Al Ghazzali, followed by his own comments:

'In the time of the philosophers, as at every other period, there existed some of these fervent mystics. God does not deprive this

11. Ibid., p. 189.

12. Ibid., p. 191.

13. Ibid., p. 194.

14. Ibid., p. 195.

15. Ibid., p. 200.

world of them, for they are its sustainers.' Huxley comments:

It is they who dying to themselves, become capable of perpetual inspiration and so are made the instruments through which divine grace is mediated to those whose unregenerate nature is impervious to the delicate touches of the Spirit.¹⁶

And I conclude this paper with the end of the story I started out with—my life as influenced by Aldous Huxley.

After reading and studying *The Perennial Philosophy* I found other books on the subject. This led me at last to Vedanta, and the greatest of all mystics and saints, Sri Ramakrishna. I was initiated into spiritual life by Swami

Satprakashananda, a disciple of Swami Brahmananda, the spiritual son of Sri Ramakrishna.

I thought then that I had reached the goal, but I soon realized I had only reached another beginning—a time of constant striving to do spiritual practice. In due time my family responsibilities came to an end, and in 1980 I was able to come to India, where I now reside. I consider myself very fortunate to live in the holy land of India, where I hope to spend my last days. This happy ending to my story began with Aldous Huxley. That is why I pay my homage to him. □

16. Ibid., p. 301.

Let Us Become Immortal

(continued from page 728)

—to the lap of the Immortal. Truth is our only scripture, this vast universe is the temple of God. Spiritual life is the adventure we have embarked upon, and Being-Consciousness-Bliss (*saccidānanda*) is the goal.

No country in this world other than India, no philosophy anywhere on this planet other than the Indian, has taught us so clearly and convincingly the scientific and psychological truth about our birth and death, about the deeper esoteric mysteries hidden beneath our flesh and blood. Mother India teaches her children the science of immortality and bliss (*amṛtatva* and *ānanda*) in a way no other country has done. The author has now crossed his eighty-third year. While waiting for the call to go elsewhere by changing the mortal dress, he feels the need of stressing that thoughtful children of India should wake up to their

cultural and spiritual heritage, live a divine life, and show to the rest of the human family that the India of Buddha and Yajnavalkya, of Rama and Krishna, of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda is still a force to reckon with in solving the riddle of the universe as well as the burning social, economic and political problems of humanity. The glamour and glitter of a technological civilization, and the miracles of electronics and atomic power, cannot solve the problem of misery, suffering and death on this planet. We all have to go back to the study of our minds and consciousness in a spirit of detachment and objectivity, in a scientific and psychological manner, which alone will enable us to crucify our egoism, lust and all such hurdles that stand in the way of Self-realization. □

The Turning Point

'Go away! Off from here,' shouted the shopkeeper. But the brahmin stood his ground. 'Did you hear me? I will not give you a penny. Go away.'

'Sir, I am a poor brahmin. It is time I invested my son with the sacred thread. Please donate something so that I may free myself of this religious obligation,' said the brahmin humbly.

The shopkeeper was not moved. He sat there, counting coins one by one. 'Sir, please help me,' the brahmin pleaded again. The shopkeeper was enraged. 'You there! Are you testing my patience? Should I tell you a thousand times that I shall not part with even a penny?' The brahmin seemed adamant. Finding no way of sending him away, the shopkeeper at last thought of donating something for the first time in his life. He opened his cash box and searched for the best donation—a worn out coin. After a thorough search, he indeed discovered one, which was damaged beyond recognition. 'They say it is a great sin not to serve brahmins. But you keep on troubling us. If I give you something today, you will keep coming back! ...' The shopkeeper thought once again: was he right in giving this penny away? The loss of a penny was a loss all the same. 'Anyway,' he thought, 'if I don't give him this, the brahmin will spoil my whole day, standing here.'

The miserly merchant had of course given away a rotten little coin. No sooner did the brahmin leave his shop than he sat repenting his act. He felt great remorse, as if he had given away a thousand gold coins. An hour went by but the coin did not leave the businessman's mind. He was lost in cursing himself for the donation when he was awakened from deep thought by someone.

It was the same brahmin again! The wor-

ried shopkeeper got wild: 'You once again! I knew such a thing would happen. I knew you got the taste and would return again. It was all my mistake....' But there was a great surprise awaiting the shopkeeper now. 'I have not come to beg from you this time, sir,' replied the brahmin softly, 'I have an ornament and intend selling it. Out of the money I get, I can fulfill my life's desire of investing my son with....' 'Why did you not tell me this in the first place,' the greedy shopkeeper interrupted him, 'Come in, come in. Please be seated. You have an ornament, don't you? Let me see what it is. I hastily thought you came to request me for some money. Hard earned money, you see....' The brahmin slowly untied a knot from his upper garment and revealed the ornament. Instantly, the businessman cried like one hit with a lightning. He had immediately recognized the ornament. It was as his wife's!

A fool of a wife for this clever man! She would repeat 'Krishna, Krishna' day and night. She would always waste money on worship. She would always make life hell for the strict businessman who *saw* to it that she never wasted anything. What had she done today? She had given away her nose-ring to the brahmin!

'Where did you get this?' the miserable businessman shouted. 'I went from here to a pious lady's. I told her of my predicament. She went in, and after some time, gave me this ornament....' The businessman was bursting with anger. He cried in pain. Already one coin notwithstanding, his wife had donated an ornament worth a hundred gold coins! How dare she...

The merchant securely wrapped the ornament in a piece of cloth, put it in a box, locked it, put the box in a bigger box, locked

that, stowed it away in his shelf, locked that also, and saw that all was safe. He was trembling with anger. He told the brahmin. 'You see, please wait outside my shop. I never cheat people. I shall do justice to you. I shall come soon. Please wait.' He ran home.

'Where are you?' he shouted as soon as he entered the house. The poor lady, his wife, was before her Lord Krishna. She came running. The businessman saw that the lady did not have the ornament on her nose. 'Where is your ornament?' he asked in great anger. 'Oh! I must have left it in my room. I remove it before bathing.' The businessman waited impatiently as the lady went inside.

'My Lord, I knew this would happen. I knew my husband would become furious. But that ornament was not his; it was the only thing my father had given me. You know how the brahmin pleaded; it was after much prayer that I handed it over to him.... You know my helplessness. You know I have absolutely nothing save the few morsels my husband grants me with great worry. I have repeatedly prayed to you to change my husband. My Krishna! I cannot escape his anger now. I have nothing to do but die. Please pardon me for the sins I have committed in life.' The lady wept before her Krishna. She saluted Him again and again.

'How long will you take? I am waiting. I have come closing the shop. Come out soon,' the businessman shouted from outside. The lady saluted Krishna and took a cup of poison in hand. 'My Lord Krishna! My life was lived in vain. I could not serve a single living being all my life. I shall end this wretched life now.'

She was about to drink the poison, when she heard a distinct ping. Something had fallen into her poison-cup. Surprised, she looked inside. There, her ornament shone brightly inside the cup! The miracle stunned the lady. She wept at her Krishna's play. However, having composed herself, she went outside and handed over her ornament to her husband.

It was his turn to be shell-shocked. 'What!' he cried, and like one mad, ran to-

wards his shop. The lady ran to her beloved Krishna and shed tears in torrents before Him.

The shopkeeper had gone mad, as it were. He opened his shop, and all the boxes, to see if the ring the brahmin had given him was there. No! No one on earth could open his shop and the various locks. Yet, the ring had gone to his wife, and she had handed that over to him.

People gathered around the shop seeing the businessman shout and dance and act like a madman. The businessman was searching wildly for someone. 'O brahmin! O brahmin!' The 'brahmin' had disappeared.

'What a fool I am! What a fool I am!' the shopkeeper wept, striking his head to the ground. People had gathered in great numbers to see his surprising change. 'Friends, all my life I have lived for these golden pieces. The Lord Himself had come to me but I did not recognize him!' Yes, the Lord wanted to remind his devotee about his duties in the world. He had therefore come in the guise of a brahmin to test him and change him.

That day, the shop did not close. 'Come on! Come on, dear friends! Please take whatever you want from my shop. It is no more my shop....' The businessman went home and was almost on the verge of falling at his wife's feet. He was a changed man now. He gave away all that he had to the initially suspicious people, who naturally dared not accept anything from him. He was now a pauper. He left his house and became a minstrel, eating what chance brought.

The later part of Purandara Dasa's life was one of intense God-intoxication. The love he had for gold and money had been transferred to God. He composed thousands of *kirtanas* (lauds) in praise of Vitthala, Krishna in another form. His infectious devotion kindled love for God in thousands of hearts then, and it does even now. In Karnataka, any cultured person knows at least a few of his songs. Purandara's stamp has been indelibly imprinted on Carnatic music. Indeed he is regarded as the father of Carnatic music. □

Reviews and Notices

LEADING LIGHTS: ANECDOTES FROM THE LIVES OF GREAT INDIAN PEOPLE: By R. Raghavaiah. Published by Shri Jayalakshmi Publications, 3-35 Near Rama Mandiram, Kukatpally, Hyderabad 500872. 1996. Pp. viii+112. Rs.30.

The book *Leading Lights* is a collection of anecdotes from the lives of great persons which impart moral and spiritual values to the young and old. There are fifty-eight event-based stories as adequate moral lessons. The morals of the anecdotes function as guidelines for the integral development of socio-religious personality.

The first anecdote is about cultivation of the mind in which Buddha teaches the importance of truth, peace, love and mercy. The anecdotes may be classified under the heads Buddhism, Jainism, Vedanta, Śaivism, Vaiṣṇavism, Sikhism, etc. Normally, Buddhism and Jainism emphasize universal values like peace and non-violence. Viraśaiva saints like Basavesvara and Akka Mahadevi teach an integral method of *bhakti* and *jñāna* for the pursuit of spiritual values. Similarly, the anecdotes of Tulasidas, Ramdas, Surdas, Kanakadasa, and others emphasize the need for devotion in religious life. The anecdotes of Ramana Maharshi and Ramakrishna contain spiritual values like goodwill and the divinity of man. Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda are exerting a considerable spiritual influence on humankind. Teaching moral and spiritual values to children is the main task of elders, and the book *Leading Lights* is useful in that sense.

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WAVELETS OF SPIRITUAL EPITHETS: By Kalluri Suryanarayana. Published by Sankhyayana Vidya Parishat, H. No. 2-12-34 Annapurna Colony, Uppal, Hyderabad 500039. 1998. Pp. 32. Rs.27.

This book is a compilation of spiritual discourses given by various saints and swamis. The author happened to be in Hyderabad in 1972-74, and during that period he could manage to snatch a little time to attend certain lectures of holy men in spite of his busy schedule. This small collection is a recollection of their speeches. It represents the gist of these speeches. A brief life-sketch of the swamijis is also provided. The speakers include Swami Ranganathanandaji of Ramakrishna Mission, Swami Chinmayanandaji of Chinmaya Mission, Swami Chidanandaji of Divine Life Society, Sri Basheer Baba, Sri Satya Sai Baba, Maharshi Mahesh Yogi, Swami Datta Yogeshwar Dev of Himalayas, Sant Keshav Das of Dasashram, Sri Saccidananda Swamiji of Mysore and Jagadguru Sankaracharya of Govardhan Peeth.

The author describes these swamijis as god-men, torch-bearers in the gloomy world which is full of misery, sin and unhappiness. He firmly believes that these saints illumine people by their way of life and words, and that is the reason he has noted down their lectures. This is a novel approach to acquaint people with holy men and their teachings.

This book surely serves the purpose of introducing monks to the public and also kindles the fire of spiritual awakening in them.

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Please Remember...

Be perfectly sincere, and all your sins will be forgiven. Sincerity will save you from a multitude of sins. A man of sincerity, even though he be an abject sinner, wins the grace of God in time and becomes saintly.

—Swami Virajananda

News and Reports

CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS OF ADVAITA ASHRAMA, MAYAVATI

It need not be repeated to our readers that the year 1999 marks the 100th anniversary of the Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati. A comprehensive account of the Ashrama's history and a detailed report of its activities were published in the January number of *Prabuddha Bharata*. Although the Ashrama was started on 19 March 1899 (the day of the public celebration of Sri Ramakrishna's birthday that year), its 11-day centenary celebration, together with the concluding phase of the centenary of the Ramakrishna Mission, was inaugurated on 13 May. Keeping in view the special objectives and principles of work of the Advaita Ashrama, which preclude observance of religious ceremony or performance of religious ritual, the entire programme of the celebration was oriented to the propagation of the message of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda with emphasis on Practical Vedanta. Barring two spiritual retreats, the two venues of all other functions were the Ramlila Maidan, Lohaghat, and the Panchayat Hall, Champawat. The events were organized by the Advaita Ashrama in collaboration with the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Seva Samiti of Lohaghat.



The procession at Lohaghat

The opening day, 13 May 1999, saw an attractive procession of sannyasins and brahmacharins, schoolchildren and important citizens of Lohaghat. As the procession made its way along the streets, Lohaghat echoed with the sound of Vedic mantras, *kirtan*, and patriotic songs. Decorated gateways welcomed it all along, and women showered it with flower petals.

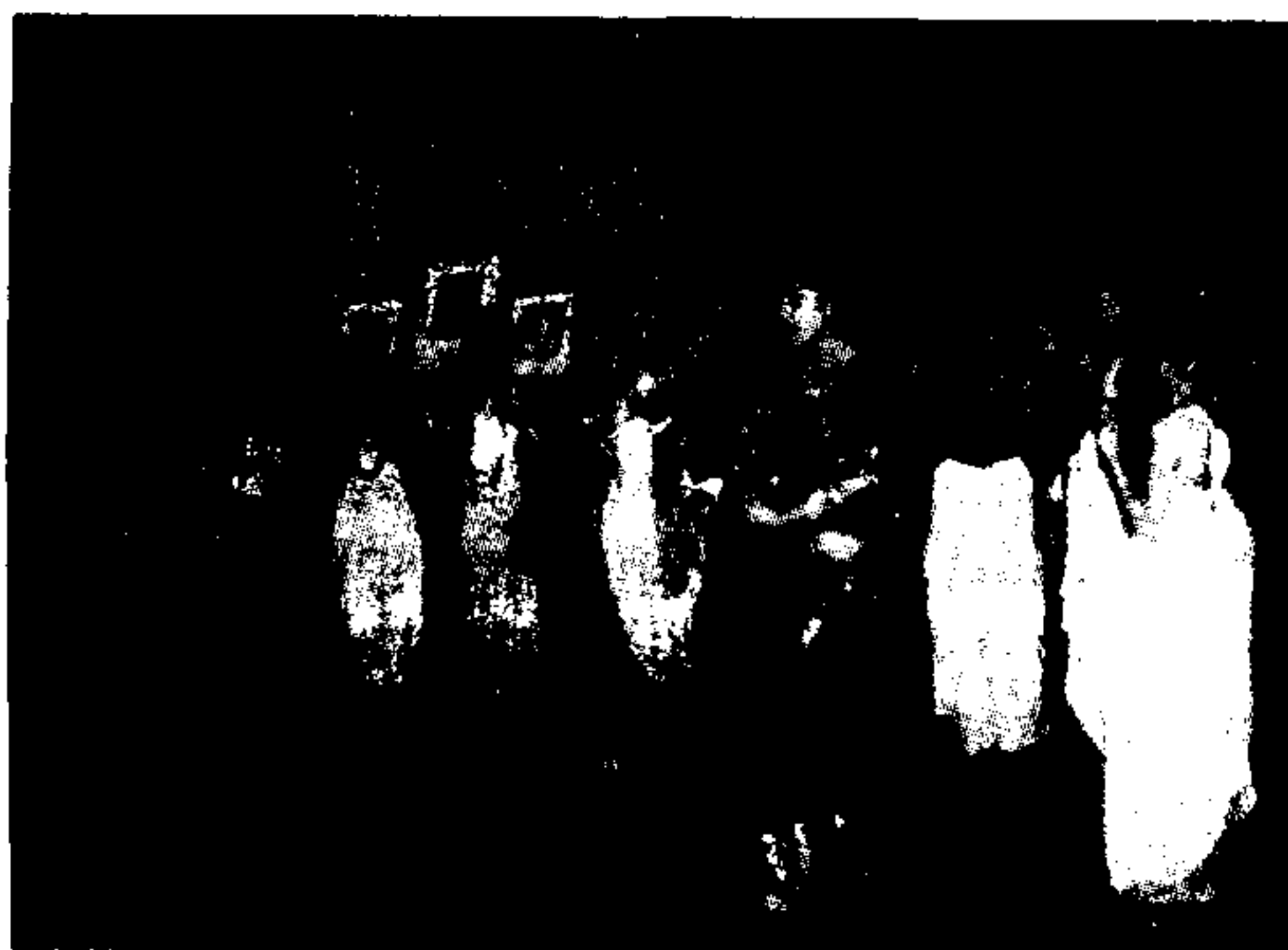


A view of the audience at the inaugural function

A fairly big gathering received the procession at the Ramlila Maidan, where a public meeting was convened. The function began with Vedic chanting and devotional songs, and the students gave a dance performance after which Swami Satyarupanandaji, Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda Ashrama, Raipur, who was the chief guest at the meeting formally inaugurated the centenary celebrations by lighting a lamp. In the speeches that followed Swami Satyarupanandaji and Swami Nikhilatmanandaji, President, Ramakrishna Math, Allahabad, and special invitee to the function, introduced the audience to the life and teachings of Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi and Swami Vivek-

ananda, and the impact they had on the history of India. Swami Mumukshanandaji, President of the Advaita Ashrama, who chaired the meeting told the gathering that the main objective of the Advaita Ashrama was to create an awareness among the people of Vedanta as taught by Swami Vivekananda, and reminded them that the Ashrama's charitable activities were only an expression of practical Advaita—publication of books and magazines, lectures, classes and occasional spiritual retreats being other expressions of the same practical Advaita.

At the end of the meeting Sri Tribhuvan Chandra Punetha and Sri Roop Singh Bohra, President and Secretary, respectively, of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Seva Samiti, thanked the invitees and the audience for the success of the function.



A dramatic performance by schoolchildren

The well-attended cultural programme held in the evening included bhajans by Swami Kedaranandaji, Secretary, Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Kanpur, and several other delightful presentations by different educational institutions. This part of the opening day's function was presided over by Sri Tribhuvan Chandra Punetha. Swami Rudratmanandaji was the chief guest.

The next morning was devoted to inter-school recitation and elocution competitions.

More than 40 contestants representing nearly 20 schools of Champawat district vied for the prizes. The competitions were held under the presidentship of Swami Kedaranandaji with Prof. Vinay Kumar Vidyalkar, Sri Roop Singh Bohra and Sri Gopal Giri as judges. Participants were divided into junior and senior categories. Swami Mumukshanandaji gave away the prizes.

In the evening prizes were distributed to winners of the essay-writing competitions which were conducted some time earlier. These competitions were held for three separate groups. After the prize distribution, Swamis Mumukshanandaji, Nikhilatmanandaji, Rudratmanandaji and Satyarupanandaji spoke on 'The Origin, Ideals and Principles of the Ramakrishna Mission and the Advaita Ashrama vis-a-vis Practical Vedanta'.

On 15 May, the enthusiastic people of Lohaghat were treated to an engaging quiz contest, held for two age groups each divided into three teams named after stalwarts of the Ramakrishna Movement. Questions ranged from arts, science, literature and economics to entertainment, politics, history and current events, not to mention the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Movement. Swami Rudratmanandaji gave away the prizes.

As on the previous evening, this evening's session too began with bhajans and featured talks on 'Swami Vivekananda's Message of Practical Vedanta and its Necessity in the Modern Age' by the same speakers except Swami Mumukshanandaji.

Next day, 16 May, Sri Navin Chandra Sharma, District Magistrate, Champawat, inaugurated the locality's first ever seminar of teachers and educationists on 'The Educational Ideas of Swami Vivekananda: How They Could be Applied to Improve the Current Educational Situation'. About a dozen teachers and lecturers attended the seminar.

Sri Sharma, the chief guest, gave the inaugural speech after which important passages from Swami Vivekananda on education, its aim of character-building, the role of concentration, women's education and mass education were read out. Swami Mumukshananandaji then introduced the subject and Swami Satyarupanandaji delivered his keynote address. Swami Nikhilatmanandaji's talk summarized the topics discussed in the seminar. It was followed by a question-answer period in which he and Swami Satyarupanandaji gave very satisfying answers to the many relevant questions put by the teachers.

At the end of the session prizes were awarded to the winners of the teachers' essay-writing contest. The prizes were worth Rs.1200, Rs.800 and Rs.500 and 10% of the prize money went in the form of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literature. Then the chief guest was requested to present certificates and mementoes commemorating the centenary celebrations to all the student-participants and their headmasters who had made the opening day's procession and cultural evening such a success. These were given by courtesy of M/s Bagoli Pustak Bhandar, Lohaghat, and the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Seva Samiti.

The public meeting held that evening was presided over by Swami Rudratmanandaji and consisted of three talks on 'Practical Vedanta in Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi's Life and its Meaning for the Present Age'.

The programme for 17 May was limited to an evening public meeting. Swamis Satyarupanandaji, Rudratmanandaji and Nikhilatmanandaji delivered lucid lectures on 'The Relevance of Sri Ramakrishna's Message of Religious Harmony and Service'.

The youth convention-cum-spiritual retreat which came on 18 May, the sixth day of the celebrations, took place, for a change,

right inside the Ashrama's Gol Kamra hallowed by sacred memories of Swami Vivekananda's stay. The 65 boys and girls who attended hailed not only from nearby Champawat but also from places as far off as Almora, Pithoragarh and even Udham Singh Nagar.



Swami Nikhilatmanandaji conducting bhajans at the youth meet

The convention began with a brief spell of meditation conducted by Swami Nikhilatmanandaji. The swami then spoke on 'Concentration of the Mind', highlighting its influence on one's education. Later on Swami Satyarupanandaji gave an inspiring talk on 'Self-knowledge and Character-building', stressing the fact that only a strong and pure character based on self-confidence and sound morality could successfully resist temptations and overcome the obstacles of life. The convention came to a close with group singing led by Swami Kedaranandaji, and the students were all fed at the Ashrama before they left.

The three evenings of 18, 19 and 20 May were fully devoted to hour-long discourses on the *Bhagavadgita* and the *Ram-charit-manas*. Swami Satyarupanandaji's clear interpretation of the main teachings of the *Gita* and Swami Nikhilatmanandaji's vivid descrip-

tion of the sublime episodes of the *Manas* drew a good number of people and proved quite popular. Swami Rudratmanandaji presided on all three evenings.



Swami Satyarupanandaji speaking at one of the meetings in Lohaghat

With this the centenary celebrations of the Advaita Ashrama concluded at Lohaghat and moved over to Champawat for the next two days.

On 21 May afternoon Sri Navin Chandra Sharma inaugurated the two-day programme at the Panchayat Hall of Champawat. The day's function consisted of bhajans and speeches on 'The Origin and Ideals of the Ramakrishna Mission and the Advaita Ashrama'. The District Magistrate praised the work of the Ashrama in creating an awareness of higher values among the local public. Swami Nikhilatmanandaji explained how by being faithful to Swami Vivekananda's message the Ramakrishna Mission was working for the all-round development of the people of India. In his presidential address Swami Satyarupanandaji pointed out that all the activities of the Mission had in view the one objective of God-realization. In his concluding speech Swami Mumukshanandaji observed that present-day society needed to follow the ideals projected by the Ramakrishna

Mission if it ever hoped to solve the problems it now faced due to its overly materialistic outlook on life.

The topic set for the following afternoon's talks was 'The Relevance of the Life and Teachings of Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda to Present-day Society'. Swami Rudratmanandaji illustrated his points drawing from the *Gita* and the parables of Sri Ramakrishna, while Swami Satyarupanandaji said that meditating on the life of an avatar was an easy yet effective form of spiritual practice. Swami Mumukshanandaji gave a succinct exposition of the four yogas and showed how each of them found full expression in the lives of Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda. There was also a discourse on the *Ram-charit-manas* by Swami Nikhilatmanandaji.



Public meeting at Champawat

As a result of the centenary celebrations the people of Champawat got to know more about the Advaita Ashrama's history, its work, and its silent but steadily increasing influence in the district.

The spiritual retreat conducted at Mayavati on 23 May drew good response from devotees. The presence of so many learned and venerable monks who had flocked to the Ashrama from different branch centres of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission added to the holy mood of the occasion.

The retreat began with devotional music by Swami Aparokshanandaji. Swamis Nikhilatmanandaji and Satyarupanandaji then spoke to the devotees urging them to cultivate faith, devotion and surrender to God, and cautioned them against getting caught in the snares of the world. The swamis also said it was imperative that spiritual aspirants avoid anything that would lead to falsehood and bondage. Later on the swamis answered the devotees' questions regarding spiritual practice, the role of the guru, and religious life in general. In the end Swami Mumukshanandaji spoke a few words of advise to the gathering.

There was a tea-break in the middle, and meals were served after the retreat. Everybody who attended the meet appeared deeply impressed.

The long series of events that celebrated the centennial of the Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, ended with a simple but very special *bhandara* on 30 May 1999. Each and every family of the nearby villages of Phurti, Andoli



Swami Anubhavanandaji with volunteers

and Balai was personally invited by the swamis of the Ashrama. The festival began in the morning with an hour of elevating bhajans by Swami Aparokshanandaji and Br. Nirgunachaitanya. Villagers joined the *kirtan* that followed and, as scores of children lent their cheerful and merry voices, the atmosphere was charged with a kind of divine thrill. All the visitors were then fed sumptuously, and each family was presented with a beautiful photofolder containing the pictures and sayings of Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi and Swami Vivekananda. □

What Happens When We Pray?

Prayer is the act of making known to the Lord or the supreme Spirit...the intense anguish or the want or yearning of our heart, by means of profound thought or language, spoken or unspoken, and the supplication for His mercy to remove it. The desireless prayer is: 'O Lord, put as much burden on my shoulders as You wish, keep me in misery, throw me into danger, these do not matter in the least; but give me, O Lord, just this much strength and fortitude that I may not be perturbed by anything, that I may not forget Thee, that I may always have pure devotion to Thy lotus feet which dispel all fear.' Be a hungry beggar, hungry for the love of God. Weep yearningly for the vision of His form of love. Be mad for Him as if life is unbearable without Him. Who else is there who feels as He does the distress of His devotee? Who else is one's very own as He is? Who else is after one's heart—to whom one can lay bare his whole heart and soul as He? If one repents, He pardons and takes one in His lap in loving embrace, even after a hundred transgressions. His love passeth all understanding, and is beyond all bounds. He is the ocean of infinite happiness. He is the ocean of the nectar of immortality. Jump into that ocean and you will attain immortality, you will swim in bliss as *rasagolla* floating in syrup. Is it for nothing that the lover of God does not want Mukti or Nirvana forgoing the enjoyment of bliss in the worship of the Personal God?

—Swami Virajananda